

JUNE 2015
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NO BORING CARS

Automobile

C63

BMW AND
MERCEDES-AMG
SUPERSEDANS
TRADE BLOWS IN
PORTUGAL

VS.

M3



ALL THE CARS THAT GO 200 MPH!

THE DEFINITIVE LIST

DRIVEN

THE PURIST'S PORSCHE:
GIANT-SLAYING CAYMAN GT4
+ BENTLEY MULSANNE SPEED
VOLVO XC90

SNEAK PEEK: THE POSTAPOCALYPTIC CAR CHASE
THAT IS "MAD MAX: FURY ROAD"



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FIND **NEW** ROADS[®]

CHEVROLET 



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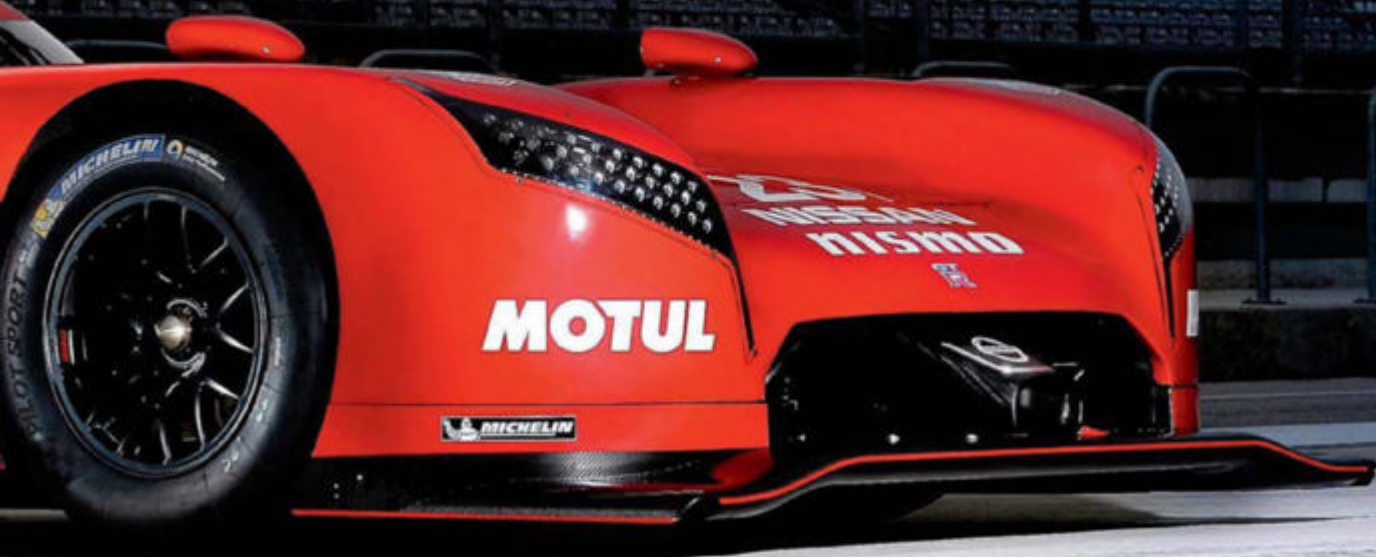
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Prototype Car Shown

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a better place for cars. And while some ideas may never make
it onto the shelves, rest assured, we'll never stop innovating.



EDITOR'S LETTER

L

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—SLEEKER, fresher, and more elegant than before, the redesigned 2015 *Automobile* has just been launched and represents a new direction for the brand. At once fresh and familiar, the new-model

Automobile features all the elements you've come to expect from America's leading lifestyle automotive publication for almost 30 years running, wrapped in an impressively restyled package.

The first thing your eyes are drawn to on the updated *Automobile* is its gleaming, refreshed grille, as we've replaced the outdated sans-serif unit of the outgoing model. More sophisticated than before, the 2015 *Automobile* grille features a dynamic serif motif, flanked by high-discharge LED callouts to our website (also updated for 2015) and now-familiar No Boring Cars slogan.

Look inside, and you'll notice that although the major components largely carry over, the look and feel of the 2015 *Automobile* have been reimagined. Fonts have been carefully tuned to deliver more power, and tasteful serif "A" accents appear throughout. Out of the gate, the table of contents (TOC) has a more contemporary feel and was developed with ease of use in mind. The new TOC allows you to access the content you want more quickly. We estimate you'll be able to find stories from page 1 to 100-plus in less than 5 seconds.

The 2015 *Automobile's* Ignition section, already best in its segment, has been engineered to deliver even better performance. Updated parts include the Georg Kacher future control system, the Jamie Kitman left-leaning loping cam, and the Arthur St. Antoine supercapacitor. The tail end of the section continues to be highlighted by the now-legendary Robert Cumberland design analysis, often curmudgeon-injected for an additional power boost. Even more updates are planned as the model year progresses.

The Driven section also delivers a more accelerated approach, featuring improved geographic locators as well as photographs and statistics that enhance the section's styling and ergonomics. More than ever, Driven distills the most exciting new car reviews by the best writers in order to deliver the sensations of the road to your coffee table.

At the heart of the refreshed 2015 *Automobile* is its feature section, which is carefully assembled using only the finest words and pictures. Honed through the years by the combined efforts of the brand's master word mechanics past and present, the feature section employs the latest in advanced technologies to deliver a world-class mix of stories from outside suppliers as well as in-house engineers.

Of course, the feature section is still powered by high-octane comparison tests (see the Mercedes-AMG C63 go head



VOLUME 30 . NO.3 . JUNE 2015

MID-CYCLE REFRESH

to head against the BMW M3 on page 68), wind-tunnel-honed motorsports tales, and finely tuned travelogues. There may be the occasional misfire as we further hone the section, but, rest assured, we're constantly working to create an exotic mix of exceptional words and photos that set the 2015 *Automobile* apart from the competition.

Upshift continues to follow the Four Seasons approach our customers have come to expect, but we'll soon offer upgrades in print and full-factory bolt-ons for our digital model, automobilemag.com, that will better highlight long-term vehicles and the varied environments they visit—from the backwoods of Missouri to the stark landscapes of Utah and all points between. Last but not least, Collectible Classic and Auctions are as strong as ever, but they, too, have been infused with more class and style.

The reveal of the 2015 *Automobile* is the culmination of months of intense effort by creative director Darren Scott and his team, as well as many others, both in house and at large.

But the most important element of all, we've saved for last: *Automobile* is nothing without you, our loyal readers. You are the driver, both the reason for what we do and what keeps us going.

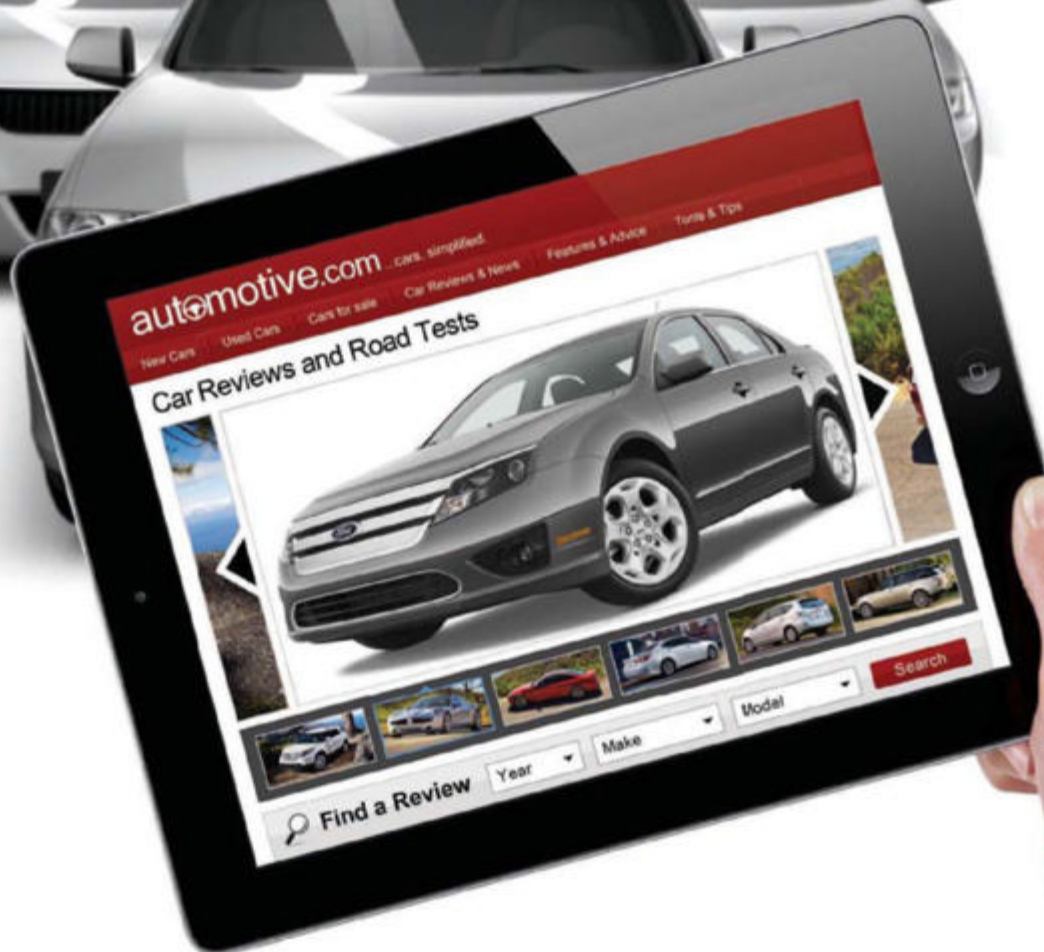
I read every letter that comes in, and I'd love to hear from all of you at letters@automobilemag.com. What you'd like to see more of, what you'd like to see less of—any and all ideas are welcome. The refresh is just another step in a never-ending journey to improve everything we do, everywhere we are. This means the magazine, our vastly improved website (which now features the first true mobile car buyer's guide in the industry), our social channels, and our videos.

Without you, there is no *Automobile*, so we hope you'll help us bring you more of what you want, wherever you want it. The 2015 *Automobile* aims not to be a boring car. ■

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Not bear, not bull, but horse

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM MARRS

Why buy a Ferrari when you can purchase a bit of the company? The impending IPO looks like a good bet for investors.

You probably can't afford a Ferrari, but should you buy a piece of the business? Later this year, Ferrari will make its initial public offering, most likely on the New York Stock Exchange, allowing enthusiasts to buy into the business for the first time in its 68-year history. Ferrari's finances have long fascinated us. Once beset by strikes, recessions, and oil crises, Ferrari is now hugely profitable. Still, its finances have been a mystery, cloaked in an omertà that rivals the Corleone family.

The fascination with Maranello's cash flow acquires some purpose with the impending IPO. What proportion of Ferrari is a carmaker, a Formula 1 team, a merchandising operation? Does it lose money on racing but still compete because it is inconceivable for the Scuderia not to race—and because of the technology and credibility that flows from its racing cars to its road cars? How do licensing deals—the company's logo has been applied to everything

from antiperspirant to anti-virus software—a global chain of Ferrari stores, and a theme park affect business? Has Ferrari become a seller of trinkets first and a supercar maker and the Italian national team second and third?

Fiat Chrysler owns 90 percent of Ferrari; company founder Enzo's son, Piero Ferrari, owns the other 10 percent. Fiat Chrysler boss Sergio Marchionne has encouraged markets to see Ferrari as a luxury-goods company because of its higher profit multiples compared with typical car companies. "I actually think the cars are almost incidental to Ferrari," he told analysts last year. "I know this sounds sacrilegious given what we produce, but it is truly a luxury brand."

Not what the tifosi want to hear, but is it accurate? "We know exactly how much the other activities are worth, and it is significant," Ferrari CEO Amedeo Felisa told us four years ago when we asked him about Ferrari-branded knickknacks and the like. "But if I told you how much it is, you'd be able to work out how much we make on road cars and how much Formula 1 costs us. And then I'd lose my job, and I have a family."

We might soon be able to put the pieces together, as Ferrari must provide much fuller disclosure of its finances when the IPO becomes a reality. Exactly how much Ferrari stock will hit the market remains unknown, with Marchionne saying recently that the original planned sale of

10 percent could increase. Even before that, though, investment advisers at Bernstein Research, led by renowned car industry analyst Max Warburton, investigated Ferrari's finances using detailed accounts filed with Italian authorities, data from related fields such as F1, and interviews with rival companies and former employees. Bernstein Research's estimate of the firm's finances draws a coherent, compelling picture of how one of the world's most successful, most opaque companies works. And it's clear that whatever else Ferrari is, it's a license to print money.

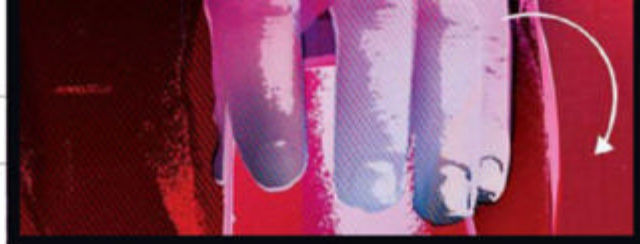
A lot of numbers in the report would make even Warren Buffett's head hurt, so here's what you need to know: Ferrari is a carmaker first and by a long way. Last year, Ferrari made a \$428 million profit on revenue of \$3 billion. Since 2005, it has more than doubled its revenue and profitability. Formula 1 accounts for about 15 percent of its revenue, and merchandising about 5 percent. The F1 team has income of around \$400 million: \$220 million from sponsors and \$180 million from its share of Formula 1's income. However, the report estimates that, in 2013, F1 cost Ferrari around \$40 million. Merchandising and "other activities" are hugely profitable but still only account for a tiny fraction of Ferrari's revenue and don't appear to be growing. Bernstein takes issue with Marchionne's assessment of Ferrari as a luxury brand.

More than 80 percent of revenue and more than 90 percent of profit come from the road cars. No other super-premium carmaker can match Ferrari's sky-high average revenue per unit (around \$250,000 per car, after the dealer's margin) and its consistent, substantial sales

**FERRARI IS A CARMAKER
FIRST AND BY A LONG WAY.
LAST YEAR, FERRARI MADE A
\$428 MILLION PROFIT ON REVENUE
OF \$3 BILLION. SINCE 2005, IT HAS
MORE THAN DOUBLED ITS
REVENUE AND PROFITABILITY.**



Ferrari IPO



volumes. The all-new, turbocharged 488 GTB and its mid-engine predecessors are the core of Ferrari's business. In 2013, the 458 Italia provided more than half of Ferrari's 6,920 global sales. The California accounted for 20 percent, and the two V-12-powered cars—the F12 Berlinetta and the FF—18 and 10 percent, respectively. Not only do the mid-engine cars outsell all other Ferraris combined, they do so at huge

properly, another executive said. "The eight-cylinder cars barely depreciate. This is the basis of the business. There are some customers who can't really afford a \$250,000 sports car, but they keep it for six months or a year, then trade it back in."

The other reason? The Ferrari name. Ferrari could charge double what it does for its cars and probably still sell each and every one of them, but modesty gets in the way of

luxury car market. Sales in the new epicenter, China, are expected to grow by 11 percent this year, but almost all growth will be in sedans and SUVs. Chinese demand for SUVs explains why we'll soon see them from Bentley, Rolls-Royce, and Aston Martin, but Ferrari won't join in. An SUV would be too damaging to the brand. Instead, Ferrari will likely debut a new entry-level, turbocharged, mid-engine V-6 sports car built on the same platform as the 488 GTB replacement. "I think it would make more sense to go one segment down-market," another executive said. "The way they have raised 458 prices leaves room." It remains to be seen how the market will react to Ferrari's resurrection of forced induction, deemed necessary due to stricter global emissions regulations.

Those regulations also affect how many cars Ferrari can produce. Its current 7,000-car volume cap is voluntary, observed to maintain exclusivity. Speaking to

emissions restrictions are both unthinkable.

If or when volumes hit the 10,000-car buffer, shareholders might look elsewhere to progress profits, and Ferrari might have to dilute its brand with more merchandising deals or build "special cars" like the LaFerrari more often. The appeal of such a car lies in its infrequency, but the LaFerrari will contribute more than a half-billion dollars in revenue, so it will be hard to resist doing something similar again, and soon.

Shareholders will also likely demand more discipline in the ranks. Ferrari's 20-year product hot streak coincided neatly with the chairmanship of Luca di Montezemolo, a talismanic leader who ran Ferrari as his personal fiefdom before being forced out last year. Present CEO Felisa, who actually ran the business for di Montezemolo, turns 69 this year and is due to retire soon, with no obvious replacement. Long-serving technical director Roberto Fedeli has already left for BMW.

THE REASON FERRARI HAS HAD SUCH LONG-TERM SUCCESS AND ENDURING PROFITABILITY IS THAT IT'S MANAGED SUPPLY PROPERLY.

margins. One senior industry executive interviewed for the report estimated Ferrari's materials bill for a 458 was around \$65,000—for a car that starts at a quarter-million dollars and goes far north with options. The same executive estimated the 458's development budget at between \$350 million and \$450 million, which it would have repaid in the car's first full year of production.

Building incandescent cars, but fewer of them than the market demands, allows Ferrari to push its prices up. "The clever thing is how [Ferrari's] raised the price with every product cycle," one executive at a rival carmaker told Bernstein. "They used to be just one level above the [Porsche] 911 Turbo. Now they are 50 percent more expensive. It's a strategy that has worked." Customers are OK with this, for two reasons. The first is that Ferraris may not cost their owners as much as the price suggests. The reason Ferrari has had such long-term success and enduring profitability is that it's managed supply

doing so. Instead Ferrari has devised a series of excuses for customers to give it more money—bespoke options, limited editions, and one-off vehicles. That's nothing new in the automotive stratosphere, but Ferrari does it with more verve and nerve than anyone else. These cars and options contribute substantially to Ferrari's bottom line and are the envy of other exotic carmakers for their variety and profitability.

Not to say Ferrari has it all figured out. The California hasn't sold as well as the company originally hoped, contributing only a third of the revenue in 2013 (\$278 million) of the 458. The 12-cylinder cars are very profitable but don't sell in the same volumes as the mid-engine cars, not least because they don't hold their value as well. "Buying a 12-cylinder is financial insanity," one executive said, "and the California is not really holding its value very well. They are not getting many repeat buyers either."

Ferrari is also fighting for its place in the evolving hyper-

"FERRARI LOOKS LIKE IT SHOULD BE VALUED AT NO MORE THAN €4 BILLION. SO €6 BILLION WOULD BE GENEROUS; €10 BILLION WOULD BE WILD."

investors last year, Marchionne suggested that Ferrari could be worth up to \$11 billion, based in part on sales of 10,000 cars generating profits of \$1.1 billion. That's Ferrari's ceiling for production to remain eligible for the Environmental Protection Agency's fuel-economy and emissions exemptions for automakers with yearly sales under 10,000. Since the U.S. is Ferrari's biggest market with about 30 percent of sales, leaving the country or making its cars meet much stricter

So, should you buy Ferrari when it makes its IPO? Warburton says, "Ferrari looks like it should be valued at no more than €4 billion (\$4.2 billion). So €6 billion (\$6.4 billion) would be generous; €10 billion (\$10.6 billion) would be wild." Most significantly, the Bernstein report suggests Ferrari remains a car business, not a luxury-goods company. "But Ferrari looks like a strong and robust business," Warburton said. "Other than some 'black swan' event, it is hard to see what derails its success." ■

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ou've heard it before: "The next BMW 3 Series will be even better than the last 3 Series." Yet recent iterations of the sport sedan have lost ground to the competition. We're hearing again that the next 3 Series will be better than the last, and this time there's compelling evidence to support the claim.

The forthcoming iteration of the 3 Series will be built on a more capable chassis that is set to be the backbone of all future rear-wheel-drive BMWs. It's longer, lower, and wider, yet is lighter than before.

The 3 Series will feature active steering, adaptive suspension dampers, and standard brake-based torque-vectoring. Then there's the really good stuff: suspension geometry that adjusts



THE DESIGN ATTEMPTS TO MOVE FORWARD FROM THE HANDSOME YET CONSERVATIVE 3 SERIES WE KNOW TODAY, WITH A MORE MUSCULAR BODY AND A SPORTIER STANCE.



A RENEGADE OF FUNK

XCite is not a new kind of adult lubricant but the code name for a vehicle known internally at BMW as “**NEC**,” an acronym for “**new entry crossover**.” It will be neither a 1 Series in off-road garb nor a downsized X1 but instead BMW’s answer to the Citroën Cactus and Nissan Juke, both highly successful off-road-style crackerjacks in the European market. The XCite hatch will have sheetmetal designed from scratch, and you can expect a compact greenhouse topping a butch body with a long nose and long roof plus a squat stance with a wide track. It’ll come in both three- and five-door variants.

on the fly, quicker torque distribution for the optional all-wheel-drive system, more capable brakes, and wheels that meld aluminum and carbon fiber.

Moving from under the car to under the hood, we expect to see tweaked versions of the current engines. The turbocharged four-cylinder should put out 260 hp, and the turbo six-cylinder will make 365 hp. The M3’s six-cylinder engine will adopt electronic turbochargers and water injection to push output to 500 hp. There will again be diesel variants of both the straight-six and four-cylinder. BMW will also introduce a three-cylinder to this segment in gas, diesel, and plug-in hybrid forms. America is most likely to receive the hybrid, a 1.5-liter three-cylinder matched with a 80-hp motor that promises 30 electric-only miles. There will also be a more powerful four-cylinder hybrid that can go 50 electric-only miles.

The design attempts to move forward from the handsome yet conservative 3 Series we know today. Picture a sleeker profile, a more muscular body, and a sportier stance. The means

to these ends include sharper creases, more adventurous radii, and tighter cutlines. The Hofmeister kink survives.

The cabin will look similar to today’s but will boast much higher quality, not through frivolities like pop-up speakers and light-up badges but rather through more expensive materials that look and feel nicer. To close the gap with highly polished competition from Audi and Mercedes-Benz, BMW will invest in details such as door seals and carpeting. There will be more tech, too. The instrument panel will be a color screen like in the 7 Series. A large color monitor in the center stack will blend touchscreen feedback, gesture control, and voice control. The iDrive dial, of course, survives.

The next 3 Series also will be available with intelligent extras such as self-parking via remote control, automatic overtaking under certain conditions, and semi-autonomous driving both on the highway and in stop-and-go traffic.

It seems, then, that the next BMW 3 Series could be significantly better than its predecessor and return fire at the A4 and C-Class. ■



BMW’s design freeze for the XCite/1 Series Sport Cross is still a few months away, but sources say most of the renderings they’ve seen are progressive and polarizing. Good—we need a brash styling statement more than we need another humdrum crossover.

XCite kicks off a new vehicle concept, design concept, and marketing concept for BMW. An internal paper lists a variety of the XCite’s attributes: avant-garde, urban, unconventional, young, aggressive, wide, low, courageous, anti-establishment, disrespectful, sensitive, and sensible. It will be a class-shifting model. A surprise-and-delight effort. **A taboo-breaking in-between product.**

The BMW XCite will likely be badged as the 1 Series Sport Cross when it goes **on sale in 2018** with a starting price **below \$30,000**. The profit margin for BMW dealers will be slim, and the car’s cannibalization of sales from other BMW models is unpredictable, but the funky crossover might indeed work wonders for the BMW brand, which could do with a bit more swagger, sparkle, and sex appeal. —GK

RACE ON SUNDAY, COMMUTE ON MONDAY

From the street to the track and back

PLANNING ON GOING TO A FEW OPEN TRACK DAYS

this summer? No need to throw down for an extra set of wheels with R-compound tires. According to Woody Rogers, product information specialist at Tire Rack, our official wheel and tire supplier, these six tires are ready for the road and the road course.

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Set of 4:
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The Pilot Sport Cup 2 is original equipment on a number of sports cars because of its versatility, combining two rubber compounds and tread patterns to maximize grip in wet and dry conditions.

BRIDGESTONE POTENZA RE-71R

Set of 4:
\$500-\$1,350

Sitting atop Bridgestone's well-established high-performance Potenza line, this tire has better grip and supports higher apex speeds than most any Potenza before it.

HANKOOK VENTUS R-S3

Set of 4:
\$450-\$1,325

A solid buy for anyone on a budget, the updated version of this aged-but-capable tire has a compound that warms up faster and grips relatively well in the wet.

BF GOODRICH G-FORCE RIVAL

Set of 4:
\$500-\$1,450

This tire's novel tread pattern wraps over the shoulder blocks and onto the sidewall, providing maximum grip and progressive feedback during hard cornering.

DUNLOP DIREZZA ZII STAR SPEC

Set of 4:
\$450-\$1,250

Smaller fitments make this an ideal performance tire for older sports cars. It wears evenly, and an extremely rigid tread gives the tire a predictable personality.

YOKOHAMA ADVAN NEOVA AD08R

Set of 4:
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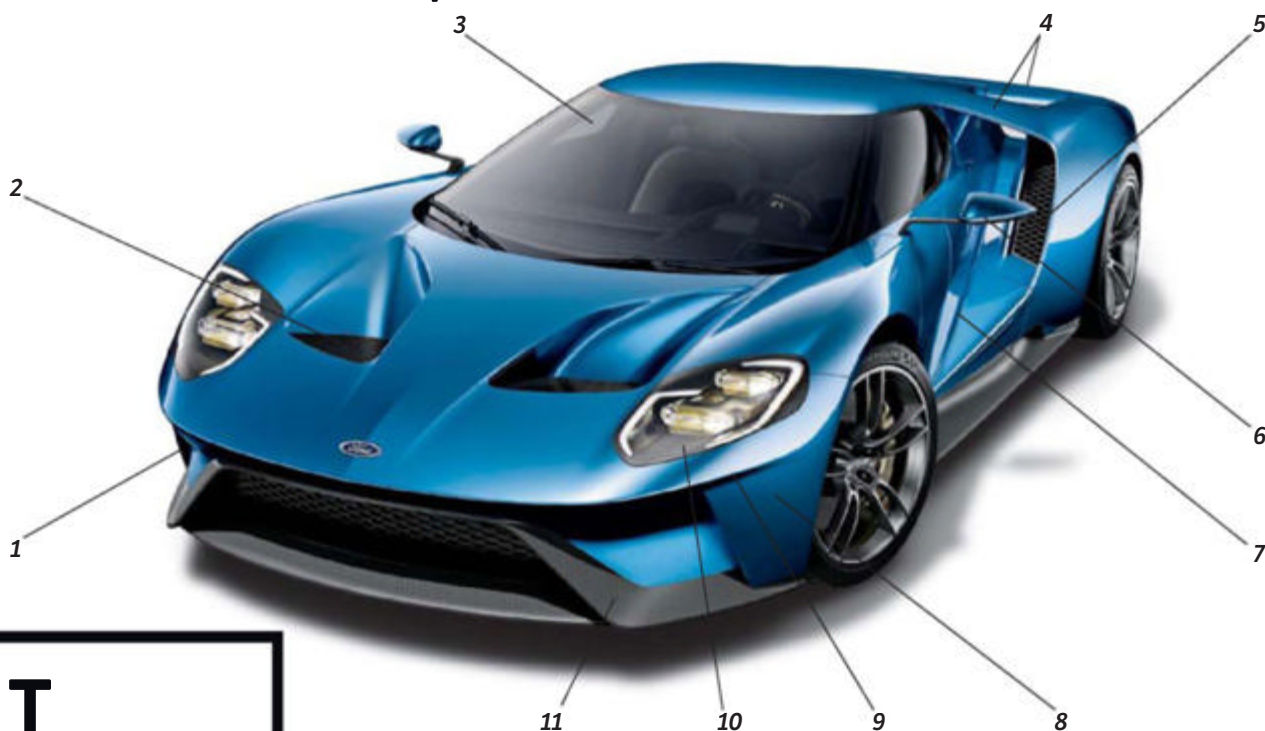
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ALL-NEW FORD GT

Serious stuff. Really serious.



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his is a really interesting design. Years ago I used that adjective for another blue prototype created under Moray Callum's direction—Mazda's Ibuki (Tokyo, 2003). Misinterpreting my use of the word, Callum turned on his heel and walked away because he thought I was being dismissive. I wasn't. "Interesting" is the highest praise I can give a show car, suggesting that it's not just another predictable and consensual design of no major consequence, but instead something innovative, with enormous potential. The third-iteration Ford GT is, thus, quite interesting.

I tend to think of the Ford GT40 as the last of the dedicated racing sports cars that you could imagine taking on the road. It wasn't, because the McLaren F1 that won Le Mans its first time out was, in fact, primarily a road car. Ford's original GT40 was just about the last pure racer with a full-width windshield, suggesting a cabin in which two people could travel comfortably and converse as they did so. They couldn't, but at least the notion was there, as it had been in the racing Mercedes 300SLs and various early Ferrari GTs. Current racing prototypes have tight canopies more suitable for

single-seat fighter planes, a place in which to accomplish a mission but definitely not a convivial place for two travelers. Who can imagine taking a Porsche 919 or an Audi R18 on a road trip?

The new Ford cabin is indeed pretty narrow, but when I saw the seating buck at Ford's design center after the Detroit show unveiling, I was impressed by the simplicity and cleanliness of the whole and thought it looked comfortable enough for a pleasant road trip. I hope one day to find out, but in the meantime it's enjoyable to just think about doing it. The way the doors pivot up out of the way makes regular use seem

reasonable, much more so than with BMW's i8, for example.

Good as it is, this is not yet a fully finished design. The down-in-the-basement secrecy under which it was developed prevented the designers from standing well back to consider their work, and I'm confident that now that it's a public property, this GT will be refined and the rather heavy-looking front will be lightened visually. Even if it isn't, this remains an exciting shape and an exciting idea: Ford going back to international racing is wonderful, even if American enthusiasts have waited too long to see it.

FRONT 3/4 VIEW

1. Air entering the front corner scoops cools the brakes and reduces drag as it exits the wheelhouses.
2. Air exits the main radiator through these ducts that recall those of the original GT40 from 50 years ago, a clear Ford identity mark.
3. The windshield is quite wide at the A-pillars, giving the impression of a spacious cockpit as compared to the tight fighter-plane canopies of current Le Mans racers.
4. Two transverse members—flying buttresses off the roof carrying intercooled air and the wing across the rear bridging the huge converging tunnels—are both characterful and functional.
5. Air for intercoolers housed in the leading edge of the rear fender pods exits around the taillights.
6. Mirrors are carried far outboard of the cabin, presumably on ultra-stiff carbon-fiber stalks to prevent vibration.
7. The lateral tunnels start at the aft edge of the front wheelhouse, with the intersection of vertical and horizontal planes describing an almost dead-straight line.
8. This hanging wing section recalls the many flaps and fins of a Formula 1 car. In this case it is presumably effective, not just present for aesthetic effect, which is also there.
9. This sharp overhanging edge keeps air below the perimeter line flowing down the side rather than over the top of the fender.

10. The designers wanted to suggest the look of previous-generation GT headlamp fairings, but they chose a totally different outline for the cover to avoid a retro feel.

11. To me, this black band is the least attractive aspect of the overall design. I don't doubt its efficiency but think it a little thick and less refined than the rest of the car.

REAR 3/4 VIEW

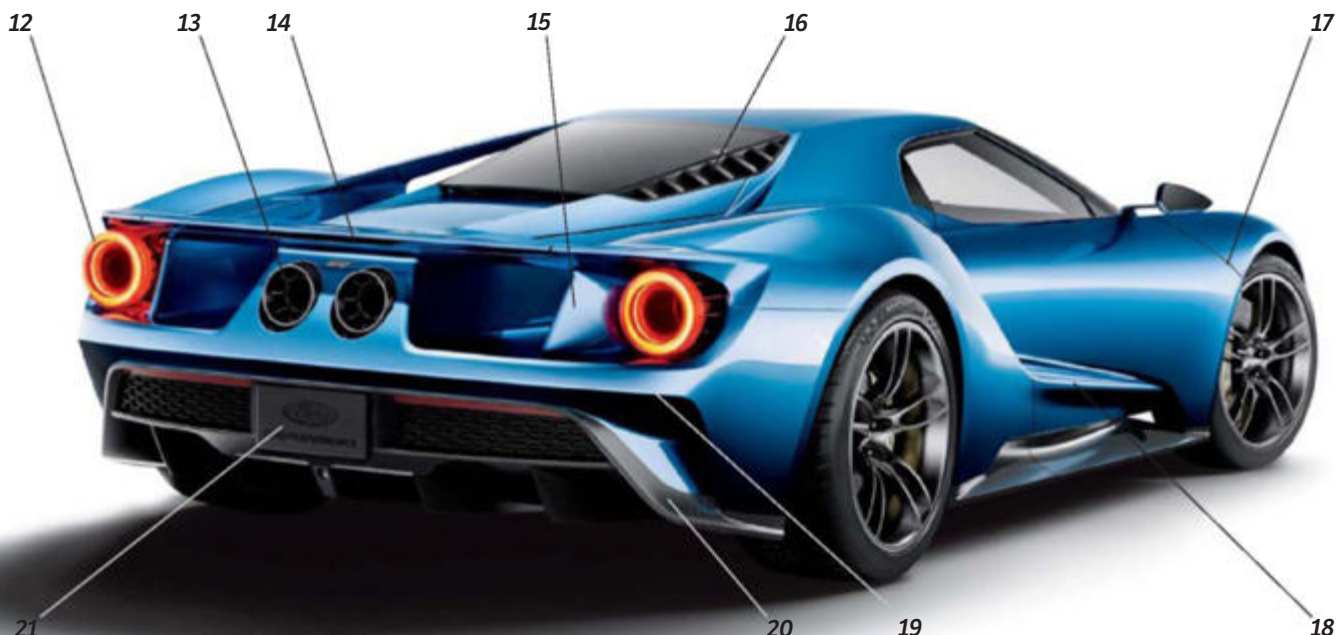
12. Big, round taillights are typically Ford, and exhaust air flows through and around the plastic rings. It's nicely simple and highly dramatic.
13. Not just exhaust gases but also hot air from the engine compartment come through these equally dramatic circles.
14. The trailing edge of the wing makes a very nice horizontal design element, neatly framing the lamps, tunnels, and tip of the teardrop-shaped cockpit section.
15. The end of the outer tunnel wall makes a nice fin-like decorative element, which is genuinely functional.
16. Evacuating engine-compartment air requires outlets at both sides and under the rear edge of the backlight. It's all incredibly tightly and elegantly packaged.
17. Front fender surfaces taper inward from the tire-defined front wheel opening. Rear body surfaces, including the sill plate, inlet and outlet ducts, and the rising rear floor, burgeon from the same point.



INTERIOR VIEW

18. This sharp styling line defines the tunnel base and keeps turbulent air from below out of the tunnel itself.
19. This clean, hard horizontal leads into a hanging wing or tab similar to the one in front.
20. Much more agreeable in execution than the similar element in front, this planar band frames the air outlet area and the diffuser section at the bottom of the car.
21. A license plate base, a clear statement that you'll be able to register the GT for road use. I'd like to think that a few of the GTs manufactured in the next few years will indeed stay away from racetracks, as did a very few of the Lancia Stratos Stradales.

22. The person who keeps the GT as a road car better have austere tastes because there is no frivolity in this cabin. Air-conditioning outlets are in the doors, out of the way for easier entrance.
23. It's not like Schumacher's Ferrari F1 steering wheel, but there are a lot of control elements on this one all the same.
24. No round dials at all. This instrument panel is aimed at the digital generation, not old car guys.
25. You'll find no gear lever either. The GT is truly a 21st-century sports car. ■



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COLD-START EMISSIONS



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25
MPG CITY

36
MPG HWY

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AN APPLE CAR? YES, SIRI



W

HEN I HEARD THE RUMORS

that computer behemoth Apple is developing an electric car, my initial thought was, “Yeah, right. Those cats don’t know the first thing about building automobiles.” Yet almost instantly, a wiser voice in my head

spoke up: “Hey, that never stopped American Motors.”

If the buzz is accurate, roughly five years from now you’ll be able to stroll into your local Apple Store and, amid a backdrop of shiny iPad Heliums and iPhone 11s, climb into the cockpit of the all-new, all-electric Apple iCar. (Somehow “iAuto” sounds like a motivation, not a vehicle.) Naturally, having been shaped under the zealous gaze of Sir Jonathan Ive, Apple’s senior vice president of design, the iCar will look like a museum piece of

surfaces, you will experience an almost irresistible swell of desire. And then, just at the moment you convince yourself you really can’t afford this beauteous new toy, an Apple Genius will demonstrate how easy it is to customize the big dashboard screen with that iPhone photo of your French bulldog. Five minutes later, you will drive off in your first iCar.

Sound ridiculous? Well, just a few years ago, plenty of pundits (me included) never imagined that little Tesla Motors—at the time a maker of an interesting but impractical and pricey Lotus-based electric sports car—could in one giant leap create an electric-powered luxury sedan that outperforms anything from the Big Three, not to mention Asia and Europe. Yet Tesla, despite its growing EV presence and sister company SpaceX’s impressive spaceflight enterprises, is a mere pipsqueak compared with Apple. The House That Steve Jobs Built now has more cash on hand, some \$178 billion as of the end of 2014, than NASA spent (in adjusted dollars) sending men to the moon. With a market cap of \$750 billion, Apple is worth more than Ford, GM, Daimler, Peugeot, Fiat Chrysler, Renault, and VW *combined*. Bottom line: If Apple *wants* to build a new electric car, it unquestionably *can* build a new electric car. It just has to start writing checks.

Signs point to Apple doing just that. To enrich “Project Titan,” as the electric-car program is known, Apple apparently poached so many engineers from A123 Systems, a Massachusetts-based maker of lithium-ion EV batteries, that the company filed a lawsuit. Tesla engineers are reportedly being tempted to jump ship with \$250,000 signing bonuses and 60 percent pay increases (though CEO Elon Musk insists he’s lost “very few” to Apple). Leading the Titan team is former Ford engineer Steve Zadesky, who holds roughly 90 patents and has an interesting connection with a company called Liquidmetal Technologies, which makes a nanophosphate metal that is said to be moldable like plastic. (How “Apple” is that?) Among other notable hires: Johann Jungwirth, former CEO of Mercedes-Benz Research & Development North America. Apple’s money is clearly talking.

Of course, if the future is indeed destined to include Apple Motors, the computer giant of Cupertino, California, will need more than brilliant engineering and design. It’ll also require massive brick-and-mortar production and assembly facilities, and that’s enough to give some industry veterans pause. Said former GM CEO Dan Akerson to “The Detroit News”: “If I were an Apple shareholder, I wouldn’t be very happy. I would be highly suspect of the long-term prospect of getting into a low-margin, heavy-manufacturing business. The car industry, with regulatory and safety requirements, is harder than people realize. A lot of people who don’t ever operate in it don’t



minimalist sculpture. Picture a large M&M’s candy on skinny, low-rolling-resistance tires. The airy cockpit will be almost entirely lacking in buttons and switches, relying instead on a large touchscreen featuring Apple’s CarPlay interface and Siri voice control. The cupholders will be the finest mankind has ever seen.

Just sitting inside the new iCar, you will feel happy, even euphoric. Running your fingertips over its sensuously curved, lovingly polished

understand and have a tendency to underestimate.” On the other hand, Apple is unlike any other company on Earth, a true industrial innovator that clearly has the wherewithal to make the “impossible” happen. One could easily imagine a manufacturing partner in China or elsewhere.

Here’s another possible twist: Apple might build an iCar but never actually sell it. Sounds crazy, I know, but many following the story believe Apple might be preparing to transform the business of driving the way that iTunes and the iPod forever changed music-buying and listening. What if you

WITH A MARKET CAP OF \$750 BILLION, APPLE IS WORTH MORE THAN FORD, GM, DAIMLER, PEUGEOT, FIAT CHRYSLER, RENAULT, AND VW COMBINED.

didn’t actually own your iCar and instead you merely paid for it when you needed it? Insiders at Ford and Volkswagen have told me they expect a future in which “car sharing” becomes as natural as renting a bike at the beach—a sort of driverless Uber taxi in which customers locate, pay for, and unlock available nearby cars using their smartphones.

The key to such a business proposition, of course, is the software interface. To truly succeed, car sharing has to be as



friendly and effortless as buying a song on iTunes. Apple has the resources to be the pioneer, to take that scary and huge first step and actually pull it off. What’s more, doing so would mean that Apple would control the whole show, maintaining the closed, jealously guarded “ecosystem” business model on which the company has built its success. To drive an iCar in such a scenario, you would deal only with Apple. There would be no fern-infested showrooms, no fast-talking salespeople, no sketchy repair shops down the road. Just click and drive.

Here’s one more clue that Apple is indeed headed into the auto business: Ive, Apple’s design guru, loves cars. He owns a Bentley Mulsanne and an Aston Martin DB4, and every year he attends the Goodwood Festival of Speed in England. Moreover, he recently hired a good friend with some interesting credentials: superstar industrial designer Marc Newson, who designed the 1999 Ford 021C concept car and owns four vintage sports cars himself. Together, the pair has singled out American cars as examples of the “shit we hate.” Said Newson in a 2014 story that appeared in *Vogue*: “It’s as if a giant stuck his straw in the exhaust pipe and inflated them.” Sounds like a gauntlet thrown down to me.

I won’t be at all surprised to see an iCar coming down the road. It’s just too challenging a project for Apple’s core executives to resist. After all, the company has bushels of money, and the whole concept fits perfectly with CEO Tim Cook’s grander ambitions of making the world a happier, more connected, and better-looking place. That said, I can’t say I’m all that worked up about the iCar. I hear the one you really want is the iCar 2. ■

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A STEADY INFLUENCE



RONALD "STEADY" BARKER DIED

peacefully Jan. 25, 2015, at age 94. "His engine missed a stroke and he coasted to the finish," read the suitably irreverent death notice in London's "The Daily Telegraph," quietly marking the passing of one of automotive journalism's all-time most amusing representatives.

An eccentric bachelor who favored old Lancias long before it was fashionable (Wait. What? It's still not.), Steady Barker was also known to sometimes rely on a 1908 Napier Grand Prix car for personal transport. There's naught more eccentric than that, unless it was riding a motorcycle into his living room to serve tea, which he did on occasion, or the time he commemorated his 80th birthday by walking on the wing of an airborne Boeing-Stearman biplane. But the reason I bring it up: Barker was a strong, if indirect, influence on the magazine you're reading now and, well, me.

Although he'd make his name as the technical editor of *The Autocar*, a famously staid British weekly that contained everything a reader could ever want to know about the latest underpowered Austin, Barker would only reveal the full measure of his wit after joining England's upstart *Car* magazine. Launched in the early 1960s, *Car* rewrote the rules on what an enthusiast book can be, with special reverence for irreverence and a wide-ranging erudition matched with a quality of writing (as well as photography and design) seldom seen in the pages of buff books, before or since.

Automobile Magazine founder David E. Davis Jr. was one of many Americans smitten by Barker, as was his successor, Jean Jennings, who included two of Steady's pieces in "Road Trips, Head Trips, and Other Car-Crazed Writings," the compendium she assembled of her favorite automotive prose. Along with L.J.K. Setright and George Bishop, a couple of pugnacious genius columnists from those early *Car* days, Barker rewrote the rulebook on what it meant to muse each month on the subject of automobiles. So exciting was the prospect represented by *Car*, its people, and its worldview that, for a brief moment in the early 1980s, the new magazine Davis wanted to start was an American edition of *Car*. The business discussions didn't pan out, so instead rose *Automobile Magazine*, a shiny point of light quietly informed by what *Car* was.

I became a reader of this seminal British motoring journal in 1971 while riding, age 13, from London to Geneva with my family in a borrowed Land Rover 88. Poring feverishly over that first issue randomly picked up from a train station magazine stall, I would never have dared imagine—bouncing up and down on the inward-facing back seat of that station wagon on our family's first (and only) European vacation—that 20 years later, my first-ever column about cars would be published in that same *Car*.

Barker had largely retired by then, and I never met the man,

although I know people who did. Ditto my other hero columnists. I credit the example of all these verbose free spirits who lived thousands of miles away for helping me discover my dream job. But it was Barker who helped me reject at an early age the views of my rationalistic elders and sane society at large, to realize that riding around in old cars was not necessarily an embarrassment, a hazard, and a complete waste of time but rather a potentially worthwhile preoccupation as well as a shaky basis for semi-regular income. Unlike Barker, however, I've yet to begin racing 1920s Peugeots for fun.

I didn't know the guy, but I wanted to say goodbye and thanks to "Steady," a nickname that I'm search-engine guessing traces to the watchword of a character in an old English radio program voiced by the actor Eric Barker: "Steady, Barker!"

Even before I became one myself, I took a special interest in the care and feeding of columnists.

So as I say goodbye to Steady Barker, let me also say how much I miss our own Phil Llewellyn, another ex-*Car* man from its golden era who died in 2005, and, of course, the big man, David E., who passed in 2011. It feels like all of them, even Barker, who departed the mortal motor house at age 94, left too soon. It's astonishing how quickly they may be forgotten by many. But even if they are only remembered by a few, they're never really finished in my mind. Even if the good lord told them otherwise.

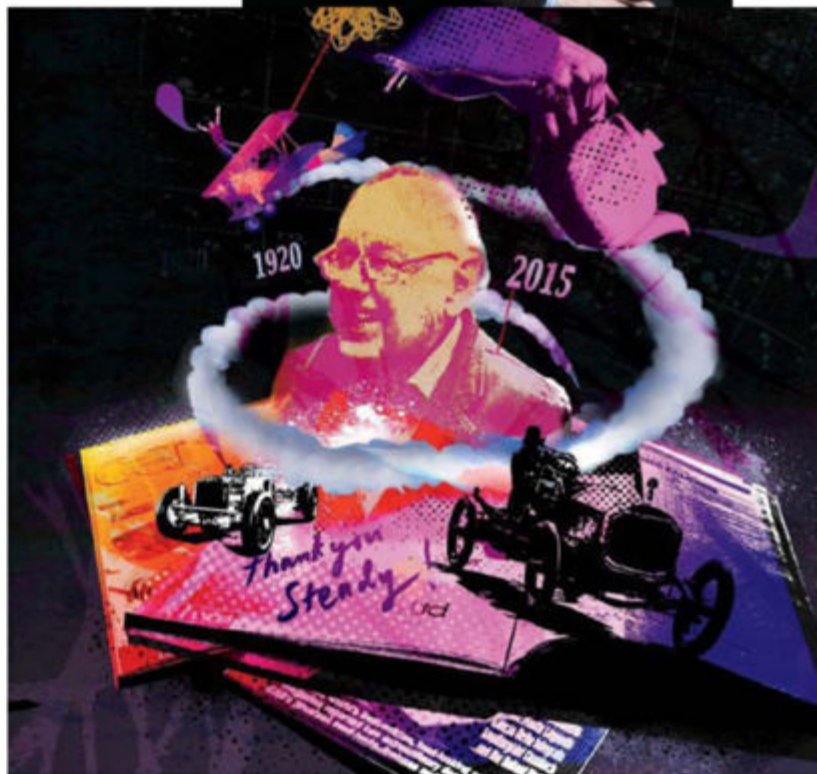


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THE PHANTOM ROSE GOLD

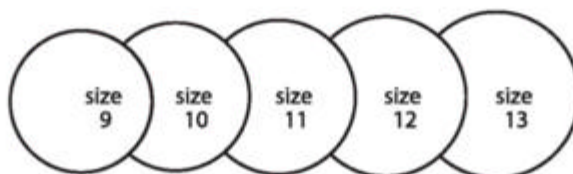
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RECORDS AND RECALLS

THE READERS RESPOND



I

DON'T THINK THE ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF

recalls a manufacturer puts out is necessarily my biggest concern ("Editor's Letter," April 2015). I think

that one has to consider a number of other factors. 1) What is the nature of the recalls? What percentage is related to safety or significant performance issues? 2) What prompted the recall? Was it the result of proactive quality monitoring, or was the company compelled to recall the vehicle due to government agency intervention, consumer outcry, bad press, and so on? And 3) How does the company handle the recalls? Does it assume responsibility and act quickly, or does it drag its feet? Of course, if a company is issuing an unusual number of recalls on a regular basis, this has to say something about quality control or manufacturing processes or perhaps even engineering proficiency.

DREW KOTCHAN
Via Internet

TOTAL RECALL

Most consumers intuitively know that cars are a collection of complex systems and sometimes pieces of systems fail. How the company is perceived afterward depends on how quickly, honestly, and thoroughly it and its suppliers acknowledge the flaw and address the consequences. I wish CEOs, managers, accountants, and engineers would understand that it's much easier in the long run to keep a customer with

good products and service than it is to regain a relationship once it's lost.

FRANK ORIENTER
Rochester, New York

Does the number of recalls by an automaker affect my opinion of the brand? Well, uh, yeah. Particularly when the automaker either covers it up or doesn't deal with it for years!

PETER MINCH
Newcastle, Washington

GM was becoming a potential purchase for me

after 40 years of crappy cars, engine issues like the Olds-branded Chevy V-8, egomaniacal management, and a not-invented-here attitude. Now I will wait another 10 years to see if the company can change its ways.

STEVE BUTLER
St. Louis, Missouri

As a computer programmer, I know how easy it is to make mistakes, and even tiny ones can have major impacts. A teacher

impressed upon me the idea that no program should ever be considered to be correct; rather, it is simply free from known defects. As a result, my clients notice when I say of my products, "It seems to work."

ERIC SEVERN

Toronto, Canada

The massive and continuing number of safety recalls has definitely affected my opinion of the GM brand, causing me to buy a Ford for the first time in my life.

GREGORY K. SNIDER

Cincinnati, Ohio



TOMORROW'S EXOTIC

On reading about the gorgeous new Ford GT ("Ford Won't Slow Down," April 2015), I see that the twin-turbo Ford V-6 puts out 600 hp. If Ford really wants to shake the auto industry to its roots, it should have a chat with Elon Musk and the Tesla engineers. An electric-powered twin-motor all-wheel-drive Ford GT with 940 hp and 886 lb-ft of torque would be terrifyingly quick even if it only had one gear.

LEN ROBERTSON

St. Charles, Illinois



Cumberford, you're losing it. The 2016 Acura NSX ("By Design," April 2015) is fresh, edgy, and priced right, plus it has a real dealer network.

TIM PEACHEY

Landisville, Pennsylvania

FORD GT: PATRICK M. HOEY

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Fountain, CO • August 8-9

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Elkhart Lake, WI • August 28-30
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■ Ignition / Letters

After 40 years of rumors about a mid-engine Corvette, I'm ready to hock my home to buy the mid-engine Corvette Zora that everyone is talking about. But please show me that GM can build a state-of-the-art hybrid supercar like the beautiful new Acura NSX, which costs far, far less than the LaFerrari and McLaren P1. And don't emulate the new Ford GT with its exaggerated flying buttresses and overwrought wheel fairings! (The best drivetrain Ford can do is a twin-turbo V-6?)

PETER MADISON
Princeton, New Jersey



KITMAN IS RIGHT (DAMN HIM)

Truth be told, I rarely agree with Jamie Kitman ("Noise, Vibration & Harshness," April 2015). I'm conservative, I like American horsepower, and I've never owned an automobile smaller than a Saint Bernard. But Kitman is exactly right that boring self-driving cars will be the future, and we'll foot the bill for the new infrastructure even as we complain. Preach on, Jamie.

SEAN CAIN
Loraine, Texas

As the self-driving car slouches toward Bethlehem to be born, we enthusiasts are trapped in the afterbirth. We're stuck with electric steering, automatic transmissions, added weight, small-displacement forced-induction engines, and tugboat styling. The falcon can no longer hear the falconer.

JOHN MULVIHILL
Oakland, California



BUILT FROM IRON

I have six Chevrolet Corvairs ("Collectible Classic," April 2015), plus several spare engines. The cylinder heads and crankcase halves of the Corvair engine are aluminum as you say, but the cylinders are cast iron. By the way, the aluminum heads and crankcase halves were cast in my hometown of Bedford, Indiana.

MAX M. PETERS
Springville, Indiana



NOT-SO-SECRET RACETRACKS

Telling folks that Monticello is 100 miles northeast of New York City ought to help keep it a secret ("Inside the Gates of America's Not-So-Secret Private Racetracks," April 2015). It's northwest.

CARL JENTER
Salisbury, Connecticut

FOR THE LOVE OF ROCK

In "This Year's Model" (April 2015), the So So Glos' producer should have been identified as Adam Reich.



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SIX STARS OUT OF FIVE

ZUFFENHAUSEN, GERMANY

P

orsche's hardest-core cars traditionally wear the GT badge. OK, maybe not the GTS moniker, which is usually 60 percent

looks and 40 percent content, at best. But put together GT and a number, and you almost assuredly have a hair-raising sports car. Like the GT1, the most fearsome 911 ever conceived. Or the GT2, the most potent rear-wheel-drive iteration of the breed. Then of course there's the 911 GT3 and GT3 RS, which are, in essence, hot and super-hot street-legal track cars. The latest addition to the wild and wonderful GT family is the Cayman GT4. It's a serious performer.

Numerous GT-specific add-ons make it crystal clear at a glance that this coupe means business. A tray-shaped front splitter flies low enough to decapitate small mammals, enlarged air intakes will catch almost as many flies as the windscreen, and the rear spoiler easily seats a dozen buzzards abreast. Other drag-cutting addenda are the more slippery door mirrors, flared lateral breathing scoops wearing embossed GT4 logos, and a rear diffuser that complements the two staggered air deflectors. The sportiest Cayman produces 220 pounds of downforce at speed.

Climb into the optional lightweight bucket seats, reminiscent of those in the 918, and wrap your hands around the Alcantara steering wheel. It has no buttons, no thumbwheels, no shift paddles. This is an environment for sports-car lovers: clearly legible

instruments, no head-up display, and no automatic transmission. The only available gearbox is a six-speed manual, and the shifter is shorter and slicker than the one fitted to the Cayman GTS.

Andreas Preuninger, who as head of Porsche's GT division led development of the GT4, sums up the message conveyed by his latest brainchild: "To us, it simply is a highly desirable sports car. But don't let this desirability make you think that every Dick, Tom, and Harry can hop in and take it to the limit just like that."

Intimidated yet? We fire up the Carrera S-sourced 3.8-liter flat-six and head off on Stuttgart roads that are still coated with what was freezing rain only a couple hours ago. The first stretch of autobahn is restricted to 75 mph. The instant the speed limit lifts, we shift down into third and give her stick. The naturally aspirated six picks up at 4,750 rpm, where peak torque of 309 lb-ft comes on, but it really wails around 7,400, when it delivers all 385 hp. Porsche's next-generation turbo engines, just around the corner, will deliver more power and achieve better fuel efficiency (the GT4 is 15 percent worse than the Cayman GTS on the European cycle), but they won't give you goosebumps like this engine does.

The GT4 feels rock solid at autobahn speeds, barely irritated by washed-out tarmac, yawning expansion joints, and impromptu surface variations. At 145 mph, traffic begins clogging our flight path, and soon the next speed limit is enforced with radar-eyed vigor.





Forget the 918-style seats and steering wheel. Your real clue that this is a killer Porsche: the nylon door pulls.

On an empty, dry, and reasonably straight autobahn, the Cayman GT4 can top 183 mph.

Simplicity is the watchword for this car, and so the GT team simplified the electronic systems and adjustable doodads that are so prevalent on modern Porsches. The active dampers, for instance, know only two settings: Normal, which is tailor-made for the bumpy Nürburgring, and Sport, which is just fine for a smooth Grand Prix surface. There is no swooshy Comfort mode and no please-number-your-bones Sport Plus calibration.

Sure enough, it rides just fine. The yellow streak does not exactly love manhole covers, speed bumps, and cobblestone sections, but most of the time the Porsche

soaks up pavement imperfections with aplomb.

The steering rack, along with the control arms, dampers and springs, wheel bearings, front tires, and brakes, come straight out of the GT3. The steering feels reassuringly meaty on-center and stays steady over camber changes, yet it is quick and eager to turn in. It is, above all, utterly predictable.

The country roads in the Stuttgart-Heilbronn-Karlsruhe triangle are the natural habitat for pure driving machines like the GT4. By midday, the temperature has climbed to 43 degrees, and the tarmac is now dry in places. The 20-inch Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires have finally warmed up, and they bite hard as we flick the wheel. We turn off stability control

This no-nonsense coupe is a serious performer





and, while we're at it, hit the Sport and exhaust buttons, too.

Now the twin tailpipes speak up with the rusty voice of the Marlboro Man, and the black box blips the throttle prior to downshifts. Ready to scare the locals? Select second gear, feed torque well before the apex, tighten the line, and boot it. What follows is an exhilarating blend of fast forward and slow motion. The rear tires, which stay superglued to the pavement with the electronic nannies on, now feel more like sticky licorice, never snapping but allowing a progressive slide before they grab hold once more and pull the tail back in line. Helping the car to behave this way is a new forged-aluminum rear suspension. It has so-called helper springs to preload the main springs under full rebound.

A BMW M4 may be more lurid, and a GT3 is more dramatic overall, but the GT4, blessed with mid-engined balance, beats both in the prompt and fuss-free manner it puts the power down and the graceful way it retains its balance. It takes this kind of no-nonsense dynamic efficiency to lap the 'Ring in 7 minutes, 40 seconds.

A late-afternoon blast back from the Black Forest foothills to the Zuffenhausen HQ is one of those truly memorable experiences you can, for legal reasons, only talk about in detail with close friends. The engine never seems to run out



No boring buttons! Kacher has pressed them all in an effort to disturb the peace.



THE SPECS

ON SALE:

Now

BASE PRICE:

\$85,595

ENGINE:

3.8L DOHC 24-valve
flat-6/385 hp @
7,400 rpm, 309 lb-ft @
4,750-6,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

6-speed manual

LAYOUT: 2-door,
2-passenger, mid-engine,
RWD coupe

EPA MILEAGE:

TBA

L x W x H:

174.7 x 71.5 x 49.8 in

WHEELBASE:

97.8 in

WEIGHT:

2,955 lb

0-60 MPH:

4.2 sec

TOP SPEED:

183 mph

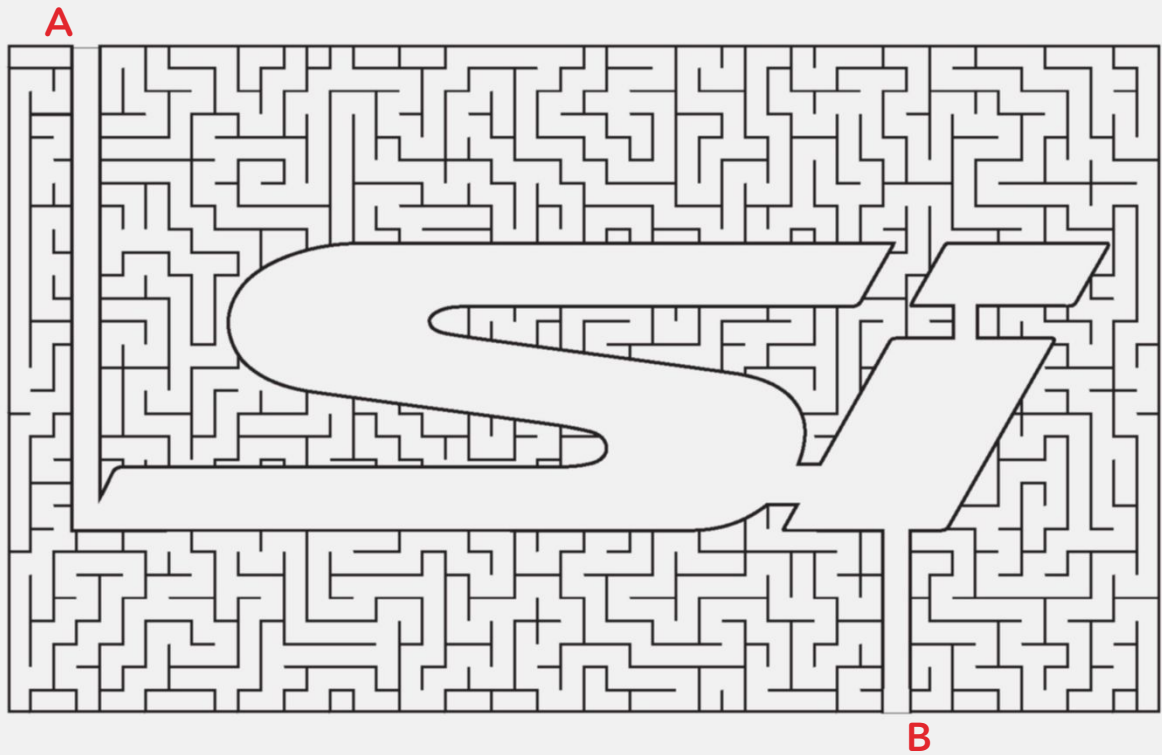
of revs, and when it eventually does, chances are you are about to run out of road. The impatient mid- to high-end urge is vaguely reminiscent of a big bore V-8, but thankfully the soundtrack still clearly identifies it as a flat-six. All the controls are weighted perfectly. The gearbox, although not quite Honda smooth, has nice short throws. Optional carbon-ceramic rotors cost a king's ransom (\$7,400, to be precise) but are desirable for the way they allow you to drop the anchor way late in turns.

The list of performance-related options is pleasantly short, for a Porsche. "We spent 24 months to define the optimum DNA, and it makes no sense at all to let the customer tweak it," explains Preuninger. You can still throw money at look-at-me goodies, like our test car's \$1,090 leather and Alcantara interior with \$4,730

lightweight seats and \$1,490 yellow stitching.

Overall, though, this is as close to a value GT-designated Porsche as they come. Starting at \$85,595, the GT4 is about \$10,000 more than the Cayman GTS, but it undercuts its closest in-house rival, the 911 GT3, by about \$45,000. Not a bad deal, but you'd better act fast. Fewer than 1,000 GT4s are coming to the U.S. Those who miss out might want to put sign up for the 2016 Boxster Spyder, which gets a manual transmission 375-hp engine but none of the chassis parts that make the GT4 so special.

"Special" is an overused word, but it's appropriate here. In contrast to many over-engineered and overpriced high-performance cars, the Cayman GT4 is one of Porsche's most focused offerings as well as extraordinarily capable. We want one. ■



The fastest way
from Point A to Point B.



CIVIC *Si*

BARCELONA, SPAIN

W

e've flown here to drive the new Volvo XC90. But first we're going to watch a crash video. A happy

family of dummies bounds off-road to demonstrate how new deformable seat bottoms absorb vertical forces in an accident.

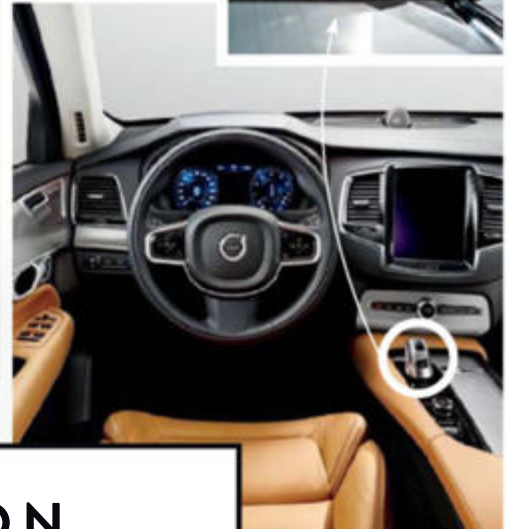
This is Volvo left to its own devices. Whereas former owner Ford frequently acted like a parent with boundary issues, Geely acts more like a disinterested deity. That means Volvo can set its own priorities. Like seat bottoms.

"We're free to be the Swedish independent company we want to be," says interior designer Tisha Johnson.

Of course, independence also presents challenges. Volvo had to engineer a new chassis and new powertrains without the economies of scale that Ford offered. The XC90, the first Volvo developed entirely under Chinese ownership, is thus an important testament to whether the Swedes have what it takes to stand alone.

The crash video over, we climb into a top-of-the-line XC90 T8 Inscription wears Nappa leather and has a shifter made of crystal. Your move, Audi.

The top-of-the-line XC90 T8 Inscription wears Nappa leather and has a shifter made of crystal. Your move, Audi.



VOLVO'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The XC90 is more than just a new crossover—it's a whole new Volvo



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spacious and airy with plenty of light beaming through the large greenhouse and panoramic sunroof.

Volvo has also invested in trim materials. This T8's shifter is made of Orrefors crystal. The center console is dressed in a sort of chain mail. Nearly every other surface wears soft Nappa leather. A quick-responding 9-inch touchscreen looks capacitive (like an iPad), but it's the more common resistive variety, which responds to gloved fingers. Swedes spend a lot of time wearing gloves. They also spend a lot of time listening to ABBA, which blasts from Bowers & Wilkins speakers as soon as we twist the ignition.

Neither Swedish pop nor a misleading badge can disguise a very different engine noise. The T8 does not revive the Yamaha V-8 once offered in the XC90 but instead has a plug-in electric hybrid motor and a supercharged

THE SPECS

ON SALE:

Summer/fall (T6/T8)

BASE PRICE:

\$49,895 (T6)/
\$70,000 (est T8)

ENGINES:

2.0L supercharged and turbocharged 16-valve I-4/315 hp @ 5,700 rpm, 295 lb-ft @ 2,200-5,400 rpm;

2.0L supercharged and turbocharged 16-valve I-4 and plug-in hybrid/400 hp, 472 lb-ft combined

TRANSMISSION:

8-speed automatic

LAYOUT:

4-door, 7-passenger, front-engine, AWD crossover

EPA MILEAGE:

59 mpg (T8)

L x W x H:

194.9 x 79.1 x 69.9 in

WHEELBASE:

117.5 in

WEIGHT:

4,581-5,165 lb

CARGO VOLUME:

64.1-66.6 cu ft

and turbocharged I-4. The gas-engine-only model is badged T6, and both powertrains come only with all-wheel drive and an eight-speed automatic transmission.

The small-size-fits-all powertrain strategy is critical to preserving Volvo's independence because building one engine is cheaper than building three. The T6's EPA numbers haven't been announced but will surely improve on the old six-cylinder's 18 mpg combined. The plug-in is rated at 59 mpg.

The four-cylinder-only plan also has a lot to do with how handsome the Volvo looks. Designers could keep the front overhangs extremely short and mount the engine relatively far from the dash. With its elegant proportions, slick roofline, and simple creases, the XC90 makes a fine Scandinavian counterpoint

to fussed-over competitors such as the Mercedes GL and Infiniti QX60.

The T8 gets about 400 hp from its dual power sources and sprints to 62 mph in 5.9 seconds, but it falls short of V-8 refinement, at least in our preproduction test vehicles. When the electric motor abruptly kicks in, the transition jolts the whole car.

The steering also gets flustered. The T8's gas engine powers the front wheels only, relying on the electric motor to drive the rears, causing plenty of torque steer under hard acceleration. The 315-hp T6, which transfers torque from the front to rear wheels via a Haldex center differential, feels much smoother. Both models suffer from artificially heavy steering, especially just off center. Setting the effort to Comfort reduces this self-centering urge but saps feedback.



The plug-in XC90 T8 gets 59 mpg in EPA testing. Headlights pay homage to the Norse god Thor. Bowers & Wilkins speakers can really blast ABBA.

That said, the XC90 is very good at turning. It darts energetically through the switchbacks outside of Barcelona, displaying remarkably little understeer, which is a key benefit of having just four cylinders over the front wheels. Powerful brakes prove easy to modulate, even in the T8, where regenerative and friction braking blend together seamlessly. (U.S. market models will wear all-season tires rather than the 20-inch summer rubber on our European-spec test vehicles.) The athleticism does not come at a heavy cost to ride quality, as the air springs are tuned to allow plenty of body roll even in their firmest setting.

The XC90, cut from a whole new cloth, looks, feels, and drives like a Volvo. Crashes like one, too, if the videos are to be believed. There's still work to be done on the plug-in hybrid, which debuts four months after the mainstream T6, but overall, this plush crossover proves that the Chinese-owned but still very Swedish automaker has a future. ■

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AUSTIN, TEXAS

G

ilded lilies, roasted ortolan, and late-career Liam Neeson have a new partner in overkill: the Bentley Mulsanne Speed.

Bentley's flagship sedan has already distinguished itself from

its rival, the Rolls-Royce Phantom, as a car that an owner might care to drive, at least when Jeeves has the day off. The upgraded Speed will invite an even smaller handful of heroes and Neros from Wall Street to Beijing to roll up their French cuffs and go slumming in traffic or to lounge on magisterial, massaging rear thrones and survey the games from a distance.

These emperors should detect a seat-of-the-toga difference between a standard Mulsanne and its speedier counterpart. A re-engineered version of the company's venerable 6.75-liter V-8 with dual turbos bumps torque

from 752 to 811 lb-ft. That's more than any series production car in the world now that the Bugatti Veyron has inhaled its last quad-turbo breath. That lets the Bentley rush to 60 mph in 4.8 seconds, 0.3 second quicker than the "base" model, with horsepower nudged from 505 to 530. And the Bentley's steamship force, with bowels-deep thrust to a mere 4,500-rpm redline, elicits chuckles anywhere from a stoplight to its 190-mph peak.

The price rises as generously as the torque, at a base freight of \$341,325, almost a \$32,000 premium over its less aggressive counterpart.

Appropriately, Bentley showed off its bigger-is-better Mulsanne in Texas, underlining the brand's performance bona fides with the Bentley GT3's participation in the Pirelli World Challenge race at Austin's Circuit of the Americas. We rode shotgun for Mulsanne laps with retired Le Mans champ Derek Bell, twirling an artful steering wheel that takes five hours to craft and features no fewer than 620 leather stitches. The Bentley lapped the circuit with estimable grace for a nearly 3-ton steer of a sedan.

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■ Driven



The high-class rodeo continued in Texas hill country. The Bentley's console "charisma switch" accessed smartly calibrated settings for the air suspension, throttle, steering, and eight-speed transmission. And while the rear-drive Mulsanne Speed is only "sporty" in the manner of an agile sumo wrestler, it rocked downhill sweepers at triple-digit speeds with gratifying poise, its old-fashioned hydraulic steering delivering direct, honest feel. Tooled metal paddle shifters summon smooth gear changes for the rare driver who'll feel the pressing need.

The engine boasts a new head, pistons, cams, bearings, intake manifold, injectors, ignition coils, a rebalanced crankshaft, and a recalibrated engine control unit. Bentley claims 13 percent better fuel economy, though it's still not enough, at 12/19 mpg, to dodge a \$3,000 gas guzzler tax.

Dark tint suffuses the matrix grille and lower air intakes. Smoky lenses for head- and taillamps, Speed-badged side vents and kickplates, and rifled exhaust outlets round out the visual menu.

Available carbon-fiber cabin trim is unique to the Speed, though it seems too boy-racer in such an elegantly understated machine. Bodacious 21-inch rims are more successful, each unidirectional wheel milled from a single billet of aluminum. Signature Spectre paint offers a villainous shade of gray-brown with a subtle reptilian undertone.

For a flagship nearly a foot longer than a Mercedes S550, the Bentley carves out surprisingly meager storage up front. Diamond-quilted leather wraps door cavities, yet those gorgeous portals can't even hold an extra-skinny water bottle.

As with virtually every

THE SPECS

ON SALE:

Now

BASE PRICE:

\$341,325

ENGINE:

6.75L twin-turbo DOHC 16-valve V-8/530 hp @ 4,200 rpm, 811 lb-ft @ 1,750 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

8-speed automatic

LAYOUT:

4-door, 5-passenger, front-engine, RWD sedan

EPA MILEAGE:

12/19 mpg city/hwy

L x W x H:

219.5 x 86.9 x 59.9 in

WHEELBASE:

128.6 in

WEIGHT:

5,919 lb

0-60 MPH:

4.8 sec

TOP SPEED:

190 mph



British ultra-luxury car, technology trails the curve, from an aging navi system to the absence of semi-autonomous functions and safety monitors found in far-less-expensive sedans.

But the rest is familiar, fragrant, and fabulous: The Mulsanne is an XXL jewel box of wood, leather, and metal that owners can stuff with every imaginable treasure. Craftsmen and -women in Crewe, England, spend 11 weeks to build each Mulsanne Speed, clocking 150 hours to outfit the interior, which includes 593 individual pieces of leather from 14 bull hides.

Over-the-top options include a \$10,900 bottle chiller. Hit the button, and a frosted glass panel slides open to reveal champagne glasses and your favorite vintage Krug. Traditional, veneered picnic tables that fold down for rear-seat noshing can be switched for gleaming metal iPad tables. They cost \$13,225—for the metal frames alone. You want the iPads? That'll be \$28,760, though that "Entertainment Specification" adds features including a 20-speaker Naim audio system, dual headrest screens, and a 60-gig hard drive.

Under a groaning \$48,000 load of options, one Speed we drove reached \$389,390. That price, and exclusivity, is one reason Bentley sold only about 300 Mulsannes here last year and a hair under 1,000 worldwide. Bentley figures Americans and Europeans in particular will favor the Speed, with Chinese buyers sliding into the back of the standard edition.

For wealthy enthusiasts, the Mulsanne Speed further presses Bentley's advantage over its Rolls rival: a sincere pursuit of driving pleasure, whenever one feels like setting down the champagne flute and grabbing the wheel instead. ■



En route to Davos or Cannes, owners can tap on fold-down iPads in a roughly \$400,000 mobile office.

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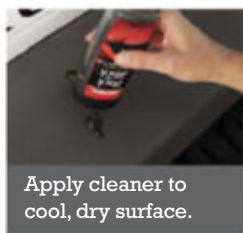


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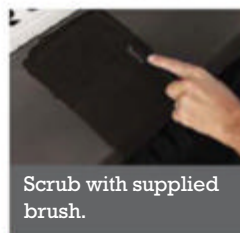
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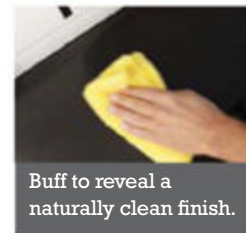
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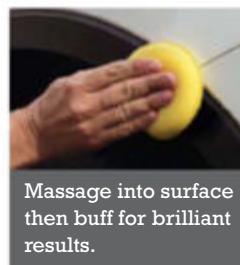


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Pour restorer onto a dry terry cloth or sponge.



Massage into surface then buff for brilliant results.



ALL THE CARS THAT

GO

McLaren 675LT

TOP SPEED: 205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2016-

The 675LT is the most track-focused, street-legal model in McLaren's Super Series line. Only one-third of the parts on the 675LT are different from the 650S, but McLaren says the 675LT is an all-new model—OK. LT stands for Longtail and harkens back to the McLaren F1 GTR race car from the late '90s. Like the GTR Longtail, the 675LT has been notably altered to improve aerodynamics. The 675LT produces—cue Iron Maiden—666 hp.

SEE MORE NEW
200-MPH-PLUS CARS
FROM THE GENEVA SHOW
STARTING ON
PAGE 60.



200 MPH

THE 200-MPH MARK, once a holy grail for a few racing cars and mad-scientist tuners, has become much easier and far less expensive to reach. Lightweight materials, active aerodynamics, and infinitely tunable forced-induction engines have trickled down from top-tier halos to not-so-special cars. That doesn't mean we no longer appreciate the effort. In fact, we feel a duty to recognize the machines that have hit this fantastic number. We have consciously excluded boutique manufacturers and track-only efforts (sorry, Koenigsegg, Saleen, Hennessey, Pagani, et al).

BY CHRISTOPHER NELSON





Ferrari F40

TOP SPEED: 201 mph
MODEL YEARS: 1987-1992

The first 200-mph production car, the Ferrari F40 captivated every car enthusiast of its time. Its magical allure is as strong as ever, even if its 201-mph top speed isn't as intimidating as it used to be. The twin-turbo coupe itself, though, is still as intimidating (read: frightening) as the day we first drove it. It tried and keeps trying to kill us; we loved and continue loving it for trying.



Lamborghini Diablo

TOP SPEED: 202-208 mph
MODEL YEARS: 1990-2001
VARIANTS: SE30, SV, VT, VT Roadster, GT

Lamborghini didn't have the soundest business model in the '80s, but the suits from its steward, Chrysler, wanted a V-12 supercar that hit 320 km/h (199 mph). The wrenches had more imagination. The Diablo rode on an updated Countach chassis yet looked nothing like its predecessor, and it was much faster than any Countach you saw on "Cannonball Run," thanks to a 5.7-liter V-12 putting out almost 500 hp.



Bugatti EB 110

TOP SPEED: 213 mph
MODEL YEARS: 1992-1995
VARIANTS: SS, GT

Looking over its spec sheet, it's hard to believe the EB 110 came from a time when Acura was still cool and midsize trucks were still small. Unveiled in France on what would have been Ettore Bugatti's 110th birthday, the EB 110 had a carbon-fiber monocoque, an all-aluminum body, pushrod suspension, all-wheel drive, and a quad-turbo V-12 engine producing 560 hp.



Jaguar XJ220

TOP SPEED: 213 mph
MODEL YEARS: 1992-1994
VARIANTS: XJ220-S

What do engineers do when they're bored? Build things like the XJ220, of course. While Jag engineers would've preferred to fit the XJ220 with a V-12 engine, emissions restrictions meant they had to use a twin-turbocharged V-6 instead. The XJ220's one-year reign as the world's fastest production car ended when the McLaren F1 debuted.



Ferrari F50

TOP SPEED: 202 mph
MODEL YEARS: 1995-1997

With no turbochargers, four more cylinders, and a far more forgiving nature than the F40, the F50 made drivers feel a bit safer while still managing to raise the top-speed bar at Ferrari. The F50 had smooth show-car looks and a clever targa roof, and its 513-hp, 4.7-liter V-12 started life as a 3.5-liter V-12 Formula 1 engine.

McLaren F1

TOP SPEED: 231-240 mph
MODEL YEARS: 1993-1998
VARIANTS: LM, GT

McLaren constructed the F1 using materials such as carbon fiber, magnesium, titanium, Kevlar, and even gold. The car had a center-mounted seat for the driver flanked by a passenger seat on each side. Powered by a powerful yet conventional BMW V-12 engine, the McLaren F1 is still the fastest naturally aspirated road car ever built. There are seven prototypes, 72 street-legal cars, and 28 track-only versions out there.

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Lamborghini Murciélago

TOP SPEED: 205-212 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2001-2010

VARIANTS: LP 640, LP 650-4 LP 670-4 SV, Reventón

This big bull learned from the missteps of the Diablo, its predecessor, and then turned out to be a far more enjoyable supercar for it. Its body panels were made of carbon fiber (save the roof and door skins), its chassis felt more dialed in, and its 6.2-liter V-12 howled beautifully.



Ferrari 575M

TOP SPEED: 202 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2002-2006

VARIANTS: Maranello, Superamerica, GTZ

The Ferrari 575M was a mild evolution of the 550 Maranello that preceded it. The "575" designation refers to the engine's 5.7-liter displacement—bigger and more powerful than the 550's 5.5-liter V-12—and the "M" stands for "modificato" or modified. These modifications included slipperier aerodynamics, which helped the 575M set the 200-mph bar for front-engine GT coupes.



Aston Martin V8 Vantage V600

TOP SPEED: 200 mph

MODEL YEARS: 1999-2000

It's easy to forget that even an Aston Martin can be ugly. About 60 people threw down for this pig-nosed coupe after the car launched in 1999. Its twin-supercharged V-8 could get a power bump from the optional V600 Le Mans package, which supposedly pushed this Vantage all the way to 200 mph. But we've never heard of someone topping out in the car, or even coming close.



Ferrari Enzo

TOP SPEED: 217 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2002-2003

Nobody ever called the Ferrari Enzo by its birth name (Enzo Ferrari), and we still won't. The Ferrari Enzo isn't exactly a race car in street-car garb; really it's a race car through and through. After all, its extra aero bits are functional. Some 1,700 pounds of downforce at 185 mph kept you on the road, but if you went faster, the total dropped to 1,300 pounds to help the car achieve its top speed.

Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren

TOP SPEED: 206-220 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2003-2010

VARIANTS: Roadster, 722s

The McMerc had a long shelf life, perhaps because the cars didn't exactly sell very quickly. Even so, the SLR McLaren stayed relevant for seven years. In the end, irreconcilable differences about the sales viability of front- versus mid-engine supercars led to a divorce between the partners, and Benz created the SLS AMG and McLaren built the MP4-12C.



Lamborghini Gallardo

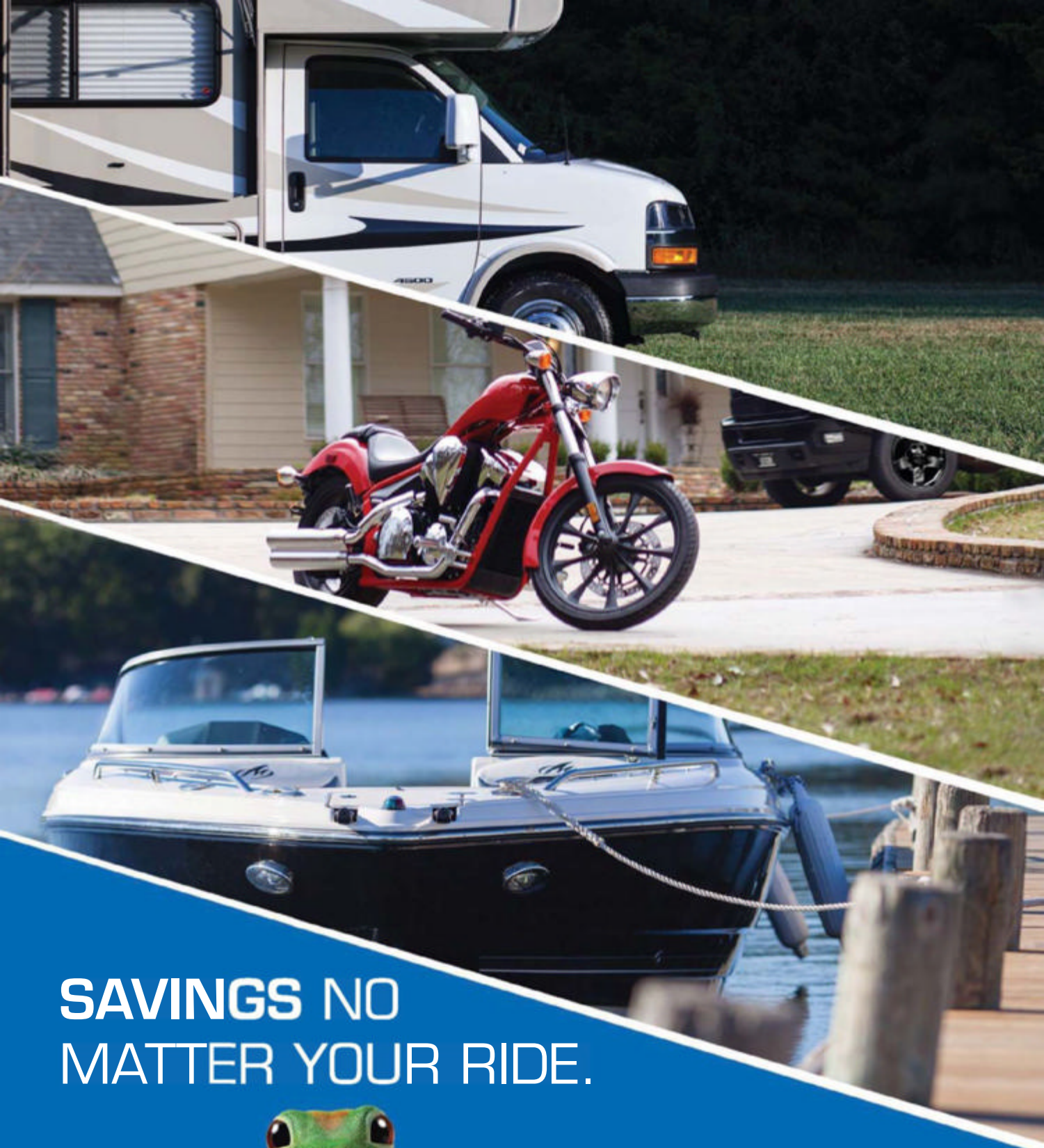
TOP SPEED: 201-202 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2004-2014

VARIANTS: LP 550-2 Balboni, LP 550-4 Bicolore/Spyder, LP 560-4 Bicolore/Spyder, LP 570-4 Superleggera/Spyder Performante

By far the best-selling Lambo to date, the Gallardo had all- and rear-wheel-drive versions, hardtop and droptop versions, and special-edition and track-focused versions. All were powered by 5.2-liter V-10s, with hp between the mid- and high 500s.





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Aston Martin Vanquish S

TOP SPEED: 200 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2004-2007
VARIANTS: Ultimate Edition

What did the extra \$19K for an S model get you that \$236,000 for a regular Vanquish didn't? A total of 520 hp instead of 460, thanks to bigger injectors, better connecting rods, and modified combustion chambers. Still, the people who bought one of these should kick themselves for not pocketing \$100,000 and driving a DB9.



Maserati MC12

TOP SPEED: 205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2004-2005

Who asked for a softer, less attractive Ferrari Enzo without a Cavallino Rampante badge? Maserati built only 50 of these re-skinned Enzos, and that's fine by us. A bigger body and a tall rear wing meant more downforce on the racetrack (its preferred destination). It also meant more aerodynamic drag, limiting top speed.



Bugatti Veyron

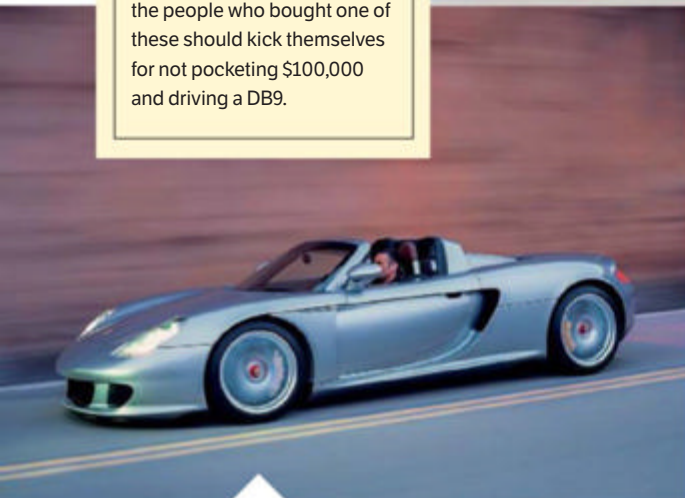
TOP SPEED: 253-268 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2005-2015
VARIANTS: Grand Sport, Grand Sport Vitesse, Super Sport

The French femme fatale for 200 mph. After the Ferrari F40, no supercar had both the performance and mystique to grab and hold the attention of an entire generation of enthusiasts until we met the Veyron, a mere six years after the Volkswagen Group bought the rights to the Bugatti name. A replacement model is on its way—the Chiron.

Ford GT

TOP SPEED: 205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2005-2006

Resurrecting the 1960s battle between Ford and Ferrari, in the '00s FoMoCo brought back the supercar that humbled Maranello with a mid-mounted, supercharged, 550-hp, 5.4-liter V-8. An all-new Ford GT powered by a twin-turbo V-6 debuted at this year's Detroit auto show and will go into production next year.



Porsche Carrera GT

TOP SPEED: 205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2004-2006
 A menacing reminder that supercars can have a rough edge, the GT could be unpredictable if not respected. But, boy, was it fun to speed in. Especially after removing the targa roof panels to fully enjoy the sounds spit from the 605-hp V-10's exhaust.





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Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano

TOP SPEED: 205-208 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2006-2012
VARIANTS: GTO, SA Aperta

More curvaceous than the retro-style Ferrari 575M it replaced, the 599 had a 6.0-liter V-12 that produced 612 hp. The GTO, a road-going version of the 599XX track-day car, produced 661 hp. It also lapped Ferrari's Fiorano circuit faster than the Enzo.



Porsche 911 GT2

TOP SPEED: 204-205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2009-2011
VARIANTS: RS

What began life as a homologation special became one of the most desirable Porsche 911s of all time. The GT2's twin-turbo, 3.6-liter flat-six, mounted in the rear, produced 530 hp, and a lightweight-spec GT2 RS made 82 hp more.



Aston Martin One-77

TOP SPEED: 220 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2009-2012

With hand-shaped aluminum panels laid over a carbon-fiber monocoque, plus a 750-hp, 7.3-liter V-12 engine bolted to a six-speed automated manual transaxle, it's not surprising that the One-77 had a price tag of 1 million British pounds. Production of the 77 examples of the fastest-ever Aston (clever, eh?) rounded out a few years ago.

Bentley Continental Flying Spur Speed

TOP SPEED: 200 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2009-2013

Oh, how Bentley benefited from coming under Volkswagen's purview. The Continental Flying Spur Speed might've looked like a less ugly (maybe?) Volkswagen Phaeton, but it ran like a Lamborghini. The 600-hp sedan is the most powerful four-door Bentley has ever made.

Dodge Viper SRT10 Coupe

TOP SPEED: 202 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2008-2010

The Viper SRT10 had—surprise, surprise—a V-10 under its big de Bergerac nose. The second-generation Viper debuted for 2008, and while its engine displacement grew only slightly from 8.3 liters to 8.4 liters, power leapt from 510 hp and 500 lb-ft of torque to 600 hp and 560 lb-ft of torque.



What owners say about V1...



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★★★★★ Arnie R., Atlanta, GA

So easy to operate, a box with one knob. No need to poke around at full-arm's reach for little buttons the size of rice grains.



★★★★★ Glenna R., Dallas, TX

Love the arrows! Where's the radar? They tell me every time. How come no other detector thought of that?



★★★★★ Chas S., Charlotte, NC

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★★★★★ Cal L., Trenton, NJ

I've owned my V1 since 2001, and I've had it upgraded twice. I trust the arrows to point out every radar trap. When I know *where*, I know how to defend.



★★★★★ Ed H., Las Vegas, NV

How can anyone not be smitten by the Arrows? Radar ahead needs a different defense than radar behind. When I know where, I know what to do. And I can tell when I'm past the threat, too. All other detectors just *beep* and keep you guessing.



★★★★★ Rob R., Sacramento, CA

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★★★★★ Harold B., Houston, TX

On my way home this afternoon I was following another detector user. I could see red blinking in his windshield as we went past the first radar. Thinking the danger was behind, Mr. Ordinary Detector User hit the gas.

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Chevrolet Corvette ZR1

TOP SPEED: 205 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2009-2013

"Blue Devil." That's the name the sixth-generation Corvette picked up after it went under the knife at Chevrolet's factory in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and became a ZR1. The 'Vette came with a 6.2-liter V-8 producing 638 hp, thanks in part to a Roots-type supercharger mounted on top of the engine.



Ferrari 458 Italia

TOP SPEED: 202 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2010-2015

VARIANTS: Speciale, Speciale Aperta

Mid-engine Ferraris have long been stunners, but none—from the F355 to the 360 Modena to the F430—looked as delicious as the 458. Its predecessors could cut it up on a road course with the best supercars around but didn't look the part for a weekend trip to Monaco. The 458 Italia changed all that.



Ferrari F12 Berlinetta

TOP SPEED: 211 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2012-

Comfortable enough to drive across the country and quick enough to make it from coast to coast in two days, the F12 Berlinetta is the newest Ferrari grand tourer in a long line of Maranello's GTs. Don't let the artsy aerodynamics and Manettino dial scare you off; the F12 is as friendly as it is fast.



Bentley Continental Supersports

TOP SPEED: 202-205 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2010-2013

VARIANTS: Convertible

The Bentley Continental Supersports is Bentley's fastest and most powerful production car to date. Rolling down Rodeo Drive, it didn't really look much different from the base Conti, save some extra holes in the hood, but the 621-hp twin-turbo W-12 engine in the Supersports set it apart from its siblings.



Lexus LFA

TOP SPEED: 202 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2010-2012

Who used a loom to build a car? Lexus, that's who. Development of the carbon-fiber-intensive LFA started in 2000, 10 years before the supercoupe came to life. We absolutely loved revving its 552-hp V-10 engine up to (and just beyond) 9,000 rpm but we hated having to make a case for buying a \$380,000 Lexus.

Ferrari FF

TOP SPEED: 208 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2012-

The FF is your best hope of hitting 200 mph on snow. It's a novel concept: a four-passenger, all-wheel-drive Ferrari that's faster than a 458 Italia. Word is that a swoopier, two-passenger version of the FF is in the works. While a high-traction F12 Berlinetta piques our interest, we still like the idea of a Ferrari with space for four.





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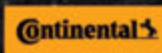
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Lamborghini Aventador

TOP SPEED: 217 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2012-

VARIANTS: LP 700-4 Roadster, LP 720-4 50 Anniversario, LP 750-4 SV

What a savage. The 691-hp V-12 flagship is a brutal tool that accomplishes its goal—neck-breaking acceleration—swiftly but not smoothly. The Aventador is even more vicious in its recently debuted Superveloce (SV) trim. The SV, above, has 740 hp, magnetorheological pushrod suspension, and upgraded aerodynamics that increase maximum downforce by 170 percent. It's the fastest road car Lamborghini has produced.



Aston Martin Rapide S

TOP SPEED: 203 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2013-

Once while driving this 552-hp Aston, we were scared out of our wits when someone sitting in the back seat spoke up. We'd forgotten not only about our back-seat passengers but also that the car had back seats at all. The Rapide S blends the performance and confidence of a well-balanced sports coupe with the spaciousness of a luxury sedan.



McLaren MP4-12C

TOP SPEED: 204-207 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2012-2014

VARIANTS: Spider

McLaren's return to road cars impressed the hell out of us. A carbon-fiber monocoque kept the 12C's curb weight to a svelte 3,200 pounds. The chassis featured hydraulics that controlled body motion, leaving the suspension to do its best, making the 12C equal parts comfortable and capable. Revving out the 592-hp turbocharged V-8 with its flat-plane crank to 8,500 rpm proved intoxicating.



Bentley Continental GT Speed

TOP SPEED: 203-206 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2013-

VARIANTS: GTC Speed

Tacking "Speed" onto the end of a model name is no new trick for Bentley, and it's no surprise that Bentley gave its popular Conti the "Speed" treatment. While it's somewhat surprising that this 5,115-pound two-door can top 200 mph, it's less so when you remember it has 626 hp.



Aston Martin Vanquish

TOP SPEED: 201 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2013-

VARIANTS: Carbon Edition

When you imagine a beautiful grand touring car, you picture the Aston Martin Vanquish. It's one of the most attractive GTs in history, dancing the line between aggressive and sexy. This Vanquish debuted with a clunky six-speed automatic transmission, but there's a new, creamy eight-speed automatic transmission that softens the shock from quick upshifts.



Ford Mustang Shelby GT500

TOP SPEED: 200 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2013-2014

The GT500 had super-tall gearing. Ford went from the Mustang's 3.55:1 rear end to a 3.31:1 rear end for the GT500, giving the Shelby some long, lanky legs with which to run. It easily hit 60 mph in first gear, so it made sense that Ford claimed the car could hit 200 mph, although we witnessed the GT500 struggle to hit the mark.

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First Ever Curved American Coin

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Going...Going...GONE

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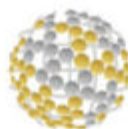
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Dodge Viper SRT

TOP SPEED: 206 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2013-

VARIANTS: GT, GTS, TA

When SRT separated itself from Dodge and brought out the newest Viper under its own engineering umbrella, we knew the car would perform much better than its predecessors. And it does. On a road course, there are few cars more entertaining than an SRT Viper. But would we try to take it to 206 mph? Hell no.



Ferrari LaFerrari

TOP SPEED: 217 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2014-2015

Conventional V-12 powertrain: 789 hp. Electric motor output: 161 hp. All together good for a combined 950 hp, the LaFerrari's hybrid powertrain takes KERS knowledge from Ferrari's F1 racing effort and puts it into a street car. Also on this street car: a carbon-fiber driver cell, fixed seats, and outside mirrors that look like insect antennae.



McLaren P1

TOP SPEED: 217 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2014-2015

An astonishing piece of engineering, this hybrid hypercar has a 727-hp, turbocharged, 3.8-liter V-8 paired to a 177-hp electric motor. Combined hp: 904. Another important number: 375, the number of P1s produced. Oh, and one more number: \$1.15 million, the cost of buying one.



Aston Martin V12 Vantage S

TOP SPEED: 205 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2014-

VARIANTS: Roadster

Don't call it a baby Aston Martin. Be it a coupe or a convertible, the V12 Vantage S has the power and the chops to hang with (and outrun) its big brothers. While the Vantage is not nearly as seductive-looking as the Vanquish, it's every bit as fun to flog.



Lamborghini Huracán

TOP SPEED: 202 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2015-

The Gallardo replacement takes only 10 seconds to go from 0 to 125 mph and is certainly one of the most livable Lamborghinis we've been in. After naming the Huracán one of our 2015 All-Stars, we drove the littlest bull 1,000 miles to Chicago and around the town, our lower back no worse for wear.



McLaren 650S

TOP SPEED: 204 mph

MODEL YEARS: 2015-

The MP4-12C is dead; long live the 650S. (At least it's a shorter name.) McLaren buckled to requests for more power and more style and brought the 650S to market just a few years after debuting the MP4-12C. While the 650S's V-8 displaces only 3.8 liters, two turbochargers help it pump out 641 hp.



Porsche 918 Spyder

TOP SPEED: 214 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2015
VARIANTS: Weissach Package

The plug-in Porsche hypercar feels far more sensible than its hybrid hypercar cronies. Insane performance, yes—the 608-hp V-8 works with both 129-hp front and 156-hp rear e-motors to propel the 918 to 60 mph in 2.5 seconds—but even so, the transition between racetrack and autobahn isn't daunting.



Cadillac CTS-V

TOP SPEED: 200 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2016-

The CTS-V sedan has long brawled with the best and baddest from Germany, but the all-new, 640-hp sedan can now outrun just about all of its Deutschland foes on an autobahn. This luxury sport sedan will even outpace the Chevrolet Corvette Z06 on a long enough straight.



Ferrari 488 GTB

TOP SPEED: 205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2016-

The 488 GTB looks a lot like the 458 Italia it replaces, and any major cosmetic changes prioritize function over form. Most notable are the large induction vents above the rear wheelwells that feed air to the 488 GTB's mid-mounted, 3.9-liter, twin-turbocharged V-8 engine, which makes 660 hp and 560 lb-ft of torque. It's the most powerful turbocharged production engine Ferrari has ever built.



Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat

TOP SPEED: 204 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2015-

The Charger SRT Hellcat is big and angry and anything but civilized, which is likely a point of pride. It has the same 707-hp, supercharged V-8 as the Challenger SRT Hellcat (which can only get to 199 mph, by the way) and enjoys burnouts just as much as its wicked sibling.

Audi R8

TOP SPEED: 201-205 mph
MODEL YEARS: 2016-
VARIANTS: V10 Plus

In its sophomore generation, the unpretentious man's Lamborghini finally tops 200 mph. The all-new Audi R8 will be available only with a 5.2-liter V-10 engine producing between 520 hp and 610 hp, paired exclusively to a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission. Sadly, a three-pedal, poor man's version powered by a V-8 won't happen. There will be an all-electric R8 e-tron available in Europe, but it tops out at 130 mph.



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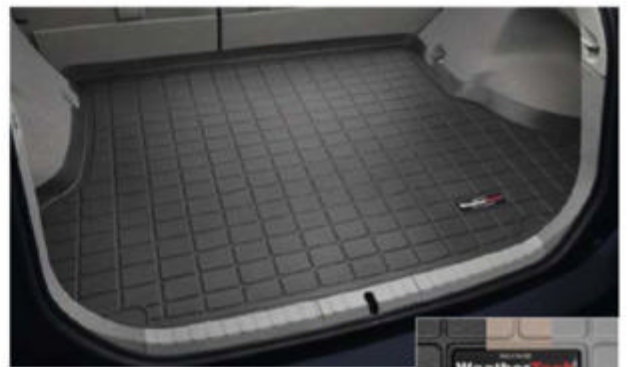
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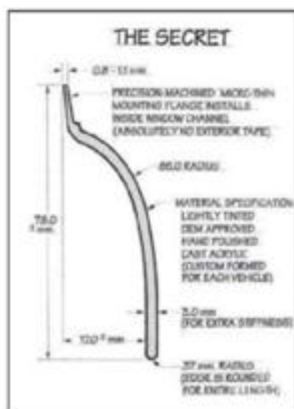
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Battle lines are drawn then crossed
on back roads in Portugal

By Georg Kacher |
Photography by Steffen Jahn



Personality Clash

Don't

let the spec sheets fool you—these rival high-performance sedans could hardly be more different. And they don't like each other.

To say the 2015 Mercedes-AMG C63 sedan happens to perform similarly to the BMW M3 is like saying Russian troops happen to be vacationing in Crimea. Mercedes-AMG's latest effort targets BMW's venerable supersedan with all the focus and intent of a laser-guided missile.

Look at the numbers: 0-60 mph in 3.9 seconds for the M3, 4.0 seconds for the C63 (3.9 seconds for the more powerful C63 S). Top speed is governed at 155 mph for both the BMW and the Mercedes (option packages for both remove the governors). Also, Mercedes barely beats BMW in fuel economy, hitting 29 mpg combined on the European cycle versus 28 mpg for the M3. (EPA ratings for the C63 have not yet been announced.) The Mercedes will start at an estimated \$65,000 in the States, about \$2,000 more than the BMW.

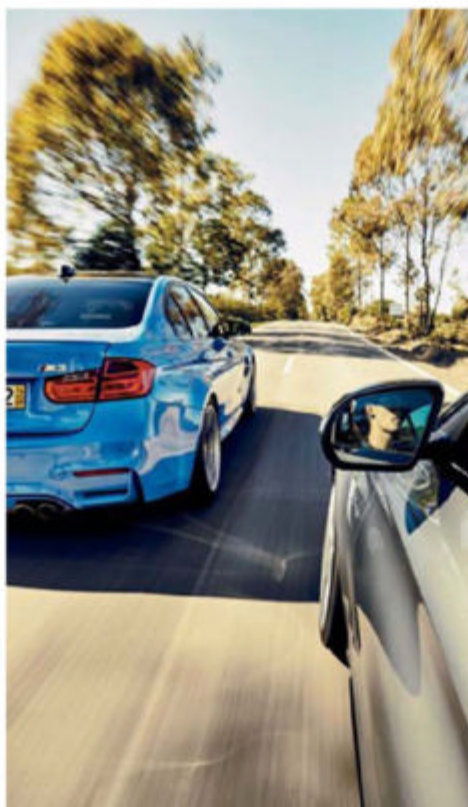
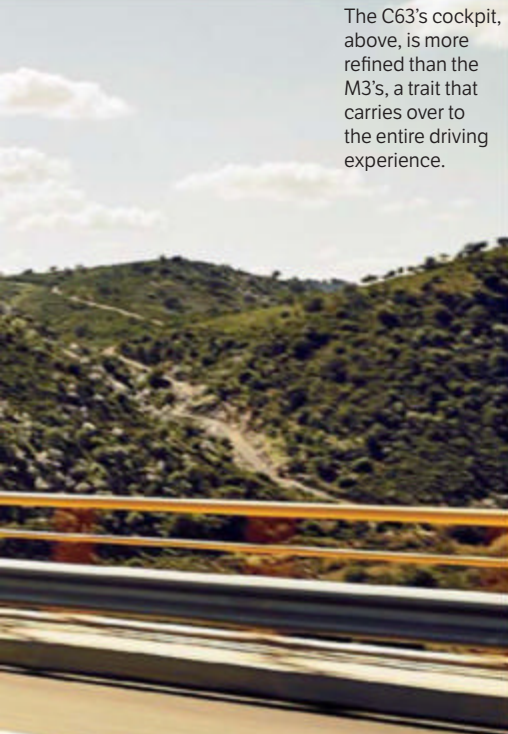




So intent is Mercedes-AMG on beating its nemesis that it introduced the C63 at the same Portuguese venue where BMW introduced the latest M3 a few months earlier. Funny, we just so happen to be here in Portugal with a baby blue M3. Let's see if the C63 can hit its target at point-blank range.

The Mercedes wears its usual AMG war paint. Cues include additional brightwork, larger air intakes, more sculptured bumpers, air deflectors front and rear,

The C63's cockpit, above, is more refined than the M3's, a trait that carries over to the entire driving experience.



available 19-inch wheels, and quad tailpipes. To make room for the V-8 and the extensive plumbing that goes with it, AMG lengthened the car's nose by almost 3 inches versus the regular C-Class.

The cabin can be trimmed either like a baby S-Class or like a pseudo-race car. Just as in the base C-Class, the materials are top-notch and the fit and finish impeccable. But no matter how sporty the driver environment might look, there is no way to get rid of that Buick-esque column-mounted gear selector—a let-down in a car as involving as this one.

In terms of perceived quality, the M3 lags behind. The instrument panel is a busy mix of classy and not-so-classy surfaces, some of the plastics and rubber seals are positively low-rent, and the ergonomics are frustrating in places (gear selector, secondary controls, main dials). (Admittedly, our test car, provided by a local dealer, is not a prime specimen.)

BMW spared no effort in developing

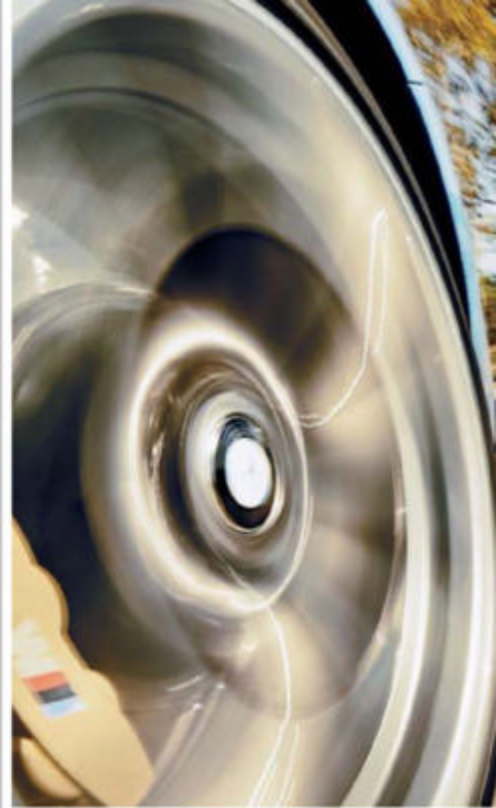
the latest M3's engine, once again a straight-six after a one-generation V-8 dalliance. The M3's new twin-turbo 3.0-liter develops 425 hp and sings up to 7,600 rpm, at which point the seven-speed dual-clutch automatic rifles to the next gear. We also appreciate that the BMW holds gears in M mode and that it shifts to the lowest possible gear when you pull and hold the left paddle.

The rival twin-turbocharged 4.0-liter V-8 prepared by AMG delivers 469 hp in a notably more relaxed fashion, calling it a day at 7,000 rpm. Its seven-speed transmission likewise does not shift quite as energetically. Yet despite all this, not to mention a 175-pound weight disadvantage, the Benz hangs right with the M3. That's the magic of torque—the AMG has 479 lb-ft, 73 lb-ft more than the M3. The

extra grunt also makes the Mercedes feel faster than the BMW when accelerating between 60 and 100 mph.

Both engines have musical talent, although the sound engineers at M and AMG alike have dialed in too much computer-generated background music. There's fake heeling-and-toeing, fake blat-blat on overrun, fake upshift ka-chumm, fake idle-speed thud. For the AMG car, you can specify an even more hooliganesque triple-flap exhaust, which sounds positively puerile.

On Portuguese country roads that have not yet been resurfaced with European Union money, the M3 is not happy. Not happy at all. Its rear wheels scabble about the poor pavement whenever we nail the accelerator, even when we're already rolling at 130 mph. The Bimmer's





Revel in rivalry: Whichever car you prefer, appreciate the fact that BMW and AMG continue to push the envelope.



rigid chassis shines on the track and on smooth A-roads, but it backfires when the going gets rough.

The C-Class pulls out a small lead here, but it, too, has flaws. The low-speed ride is, for instance, disappointingly brittle, and body roll is occasionally an issue. And when it comes to crunch time, the C63 AMG will try to ever so slightly understeer out of trouble. Through the same series of corners taken at comparable velocity, the M3's nose bites, turns in, and holds the line. And if all else fails, the M3 still has an old-fashioned hand brake to yank in the hairpins.

The Mercedes is nearly invincible in two areas: traction and deceleration. Even with stability control in permissive Sport handling mode, you can floor the throttle ridiculously early, well before unwinding the steering. Although stability control will step in eventually and

adjust the trajectory, it's the mechanical rear differential that performs magic by feeding exactly the right amount of torque to each of the rear wheels at exactly the right time. By doing so, it helps maintain the proper dynamic flow, and it manifests what might be best described as blind dialogue between driver input and vehicle response.

The M3 is, in contrast, ragged and uncouth, but is also more entertaining. An electronically controlled rear differential—an option on the C63 but standard on the M3—tends to whip the car through tight corners in zig-zag, grip-no-grip fashion. We're not saying it's a 1980s 911 Turbo, but it is a letdown compared to the totally unruffled C63. There is a way to erase this behavior for good: Keep the ESP button pushed for more than 5 seconds, check the pace-maker one last time, and then go for it.



2016 Mercedes-Benz C450 AMG 4Matic

NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED

BY ARTHUR ST. ANTOINE

AMID THE FLASHBULBS AND BREATHLESS CHATTER

surrounding the new C63 and C63 S, it would be easy enough to overlook the new 2016 Mercedes-Benz C450 AMG 4Matic coming this fall. That would be a mistake. In some ways, it even outshines its costlier and faster brethren.

No twin-turbo V-8 here. Instead, the C450 uses a smaller, lighter, twin-turbo 3.0-liter V-6 making 362 hp and 384 lb-ft of torque. Obviously, the C450 can't match the V-8 cars in straight-line go, but the drop is less than you'd probably guess: Mercedes claims 0 to 60 mph in 4.9 seconds (versus 4.0 for the C63).

As in the C63, a seven-speed automatic is standard, but it's a different unit than in the V-8 cars. Nonetheless, the C450's 7G-Tronic Plus offers the same full manual control (via paddle shifters) and a choice of increasingly aggressive shift programs. While ultimately not as light-switch quick as the AMG unit, manual shifts in Sport Plus mode are satisfyingly brisk.

The C63's AMG-designed front suspension, crafted largely of aluminum, essentially carries over into the C450, but it goes a step further via the addition of 4Matic all-wheel drive. Torque is split 33 percent front, 67 percent rear, delivering the lively handling dynamics of a rear-drive car with a measure of useful added traction up front.

Driven in the twisting mountain roads above the seaside resort town of Quinta do Lago, Portugal, the C450 feels like no kind of compromise at all. It seems lighter and nimbler than the V-8 cars; the nose points with delightful quickness. The electromechanical speed-sensitive sport steering offers the same sublime response and feedback as the C63, and thanks to the C450's reduced torque and 4Matic, it powers out of turns with absolutely no drama or threat of tail-wagging. It's a blast to drive hard.

THE SPECS

ON SALE:

Fall

BASE PRICE:

\$52,000 (est)

ENGINE:

3.0L twin-turbo DOHC
24-valve V-6/362 hp @
5,500-6,000 rpm,
384 lb-ft @
2,000-4,200 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

7-speed automatic

LAYOUT:

4-door, 5-passenger,
front-engine, AWD sedan

EPA MILEAGE:

18/26 city/highway (est)

L x W x H:

187.2 x 71.3 x 56.1 in

WHEELBASE:

111.8 in

WEIGHT:

3,800 lb (est)

0-60 MPH:

4.9 sec

TOP SPEED:

155 mph

This BMW should have had a clear braking advantage, as it came equipped with optional carbon-ceramic rotors (also offered on the C63 but not fitted on our test car). However, it could have used fresh pads. Fading was not an issue, but we expected more bite, more instant action, and more feedback. The C63, with its standard steel rotors, delivered all that. The brakes operated with in-your-face urgency yet were easy to modulate. They stopped us with no drama no matter how late we slammed the pedal.

Because they slow the forward thrust with sensitivity and insistence, brakes are also an integral element of the C63's utterly composed character. At the end of a 23-mile sickbag stretch driven with a knife between our teeth, the left pedal felt a little soft in the Mercedes, and it needed a somewhat more determined hoof to perform the act. But all in all, this stopping apparatus deserves five stars out of five.

The days of hydraulic steering are history, but fortunately so are the days of overly light, strangely artificial electric power steering. In the BMW, the steering adjusts for effort as well as the ratio. There are the three usual calibrations to select from. Even in Comfort mode, there is a reassuring stiffness that follows your hands as they apply more lock, but unlike in the M5, it's not overly heavy. Self-centering is quite subtle, and the gearing is perfect for quick flicks. Above all, it's dead-on accurate.

Mercedes' variable-rate steering is lighter, more forthcoming, and more linear. It is tuned for positive and fuss-free changes of direction, and that is totally in line with the car's more laid-back character if not as spot-on attentive as the M3's tiller.

Both cars featured optional 19-inch rims shod in Michelin Super Sport tires, although the Mercedes' were narrower and of different chemistry. As far as grip and traction go, the winner wears a three-pointed star. (It's worth mentioning that the dealer-sourced M3 was not on its original-spec tires.)

As far as smiles per mile go, it's a much closer shave. The M3 provides more old-fashioned fun. It turns in with the agility of a chameleon's tongue, and it hangs on like a lizard to a vertical wall—until it eventually whips its tail like an angry

THE SPECS

2015 MERCEDES-AMG C63

BASE PRICE:

\$65,000 (est)

ENGINE:

 4.0L twin-turbo DOHC
32-valve V-8/469 hp @
5,500-6,250 rpm,
479 lb-ft @ 1,750-4,500

TRANSMISSION:

7-speed automatic

LAYOUT:

 4-door, 5-passenger,
front-engine, RWD sedan

EPA MILEAGE:

TBA

L x W x H:

187.2 x 72.4 x 56.1 in

WHEELBASE:

111.8 in

WEIGHT:

3,616 lb

0-60 MPH:

4.0 sec

TOP SPEED:

155 mph



THE BMW ALMOST ALWAYS LET GO FIRST AT THE REAR; THE C63 WILL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD NOT LET GO AT ALL. IT BLENDS TENACIOUS GRIP WITH STRONG STABILITY, AND IT HANDLES IN A REASSURINGLY NEUTRAL FASHION.



2015 BMW M3

BASE PRICE:

\$62,950

ENGINE:

 3.0L twin-turbo DOHC
24-valve I-6/425 hp @
5,500-7,300 rpm,
406 lb-ft @
1,850-5,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

 7-speed dual-clutch
automatic

LAYOUT:

 4-door, 5-passenger,
front-engine, RWD sedan

EPA MILEAGE:

17/24 mpg city/hwy

L x W x H:

184.5 x 73.9 x 56.1 in

WHEELBASE:

110.7 in

WEIGHT:

3,595 lb

0-60 MPH:

3.9 sec

TOP SPEED:

155 mph

croc. The BMW almost always let go first at the rear; the C63 will in all likelihood not let go at all. It blends tenacious grip with strong stability, and it handles in a reassuringly neutral fashion. When we say neutral, we don't mean boring. Just as you can induce a trace of understeer, you can coax the Benz into a mild drift—or a loud and long one with stability control deactivated.

Seldom has it been more difficult to crown a winner. Although the two contenders were born on different planets, and despite the fact that they field diverse talents, they both reach similar heights, and both are pretty damn fun. The M3 is more sporty, more raw, more challenging, and more extroverted in character. It is, in other words, what an M3 has always been. Those who've loved this car in the past will worship it still.

This side of the SLS and GT, AMGs have always been high-powered grand tourers. The C63 AMG certainly upholds that tradition. But it is not, especially in all the areas that matter, simply more of the same.

Over the course of its redesign, the top-of-the-line C-Class has picked up a bunch of fresh virtues. It steers with more enthusiasm, it brakes with more bite, it puts power down with more determination. And, most important, it handles with a delicate sweetness none of its nose-heavy, tail-happy predecessors ever approached. Compared with the M3, the new C63 AMG is the more complete all-rounder, creamier and more composed but dynamically just as awesome. If you want the smiles without the pain, the Mercedes is the one to reach out for. ■

W

hen's the last time you saw a truly epic car chase in a movie? No, not the mostly computer-generated scenes from the "Fast & Furious" series but rather a classic in the spirit of John Frankenheimer's "Ronin"?

George Miller, the creator and director of the "Mad Max" movies, is staking his reputation and likely a \$100 million-plus budget on a

MILLER'S

"MAD MAX: FURY ROAD"



movie that is almost entirely a car chase. Miller says his new film, “Mad Max: Fury Road,” which hits theaters May 15, begins with a chase that doesn’t end until the movie does. The chase *is* the movie.

“Ronin” was all Audis, Peugeots, and Benzes barreling through France. The vehicles of Miller’s “Fury Road” are far different—dozens

of bizarre and reimagined muscle cars and rat rods bashing their way through a barren desert wasteland. There is very little in the way of dialogue. The nonstop four-wheeled action does most of the talking.

Even better, the cars, stunts, and crashes are real. Miller has shot CGI films before (bizarrely, he’s also behind both “Babe: Pig in the City”

MAYHEM

MAKES A PLAY FOR THE GREATEST CAR CHASE EVER

BY JASON H. HARPER



and “Happy Feet”), but this wasn’t one of them. In order to execute his vision for the film, some 150 vehicles were built in all. By the end, only one survived.

“Fury Road” is a “reboot” of the “Mad Max” franchise, movie speak for “doing whatever the hell we want.” And what Miller wanted was the same grim mood and the theme of rampaging hooligans out for gas and blood that punctuated the previous films. But this time he jettisoned Mel Gibson for a younger actor (Tom Hardy from “The Dark Knight Rises”) and added a crew of litesome ladies headed up by a buzz-cut Charlize Theron. Most important, Max’s Australian-made Ford Falcon XB GT coupe—the famed Interceptor—also makes a return, as does a general reliance on cars and trucks from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Miller is Australian and made the first three films in his home country. The original, “Mad Max,” released in 1979, was a straight-up indie film shot for around \$350,000. The follow-up, “The Road Warrior,” has become the classic you think of when you think of “Mad Max.” In essence it was a Western recast as a postapocalyptic tale, with hot rods and motorcycles replacing horses and a big-rig tanker serving as a speeding steam train.

But by the third installment, “Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome,” the Aussie indie spirit had gone Hollywood. The vehicles took a back seat to a gladiator cage and Tina Turner’s crazy 1980s hairdo. No wonder it was the last “Mad Max” flick for 30 years.

This time, Miller didn’t write a script. Rather, he and his collaborators created storyboards—thousands of drawings that serve as a testament to the all-action movie. The original vehicle concepts were especially fantastical, including a 747 jumbo jet welded to a train, pulled by a half-dozen semitrailers. Awesome, surely, but it would have made little sense in a world where gas is precious.

The design of the real-world vehicles fell to the film’s production designer, a gearhead named Colin Gibson. “We tried to take the flavor and coolness of those ideas but make them real and believable,”

Some 150 modified muscle cars and rat rods were created for the film. All ran and most were crashed. Below right: Charlize Theron and director George Miller.



“Mad Max: Fury Road” hits theaters May 15. Catch the epic trailer and preview action at madmaxmovie.com.



“

IF THERE'S GOING TO BE A WAR, YOU WANT REAL STEEL TO PROTECT YOU. AND AT THE END OF WORLD, YOU CAN'T FIX A COMPUTER. WHAT WOULD YOU SALVAGE, A COROLLA OR A 1973 FALCON?”



Gibson says. “The supervising stunt coordinator, Guy Norris, and I were desperate to cling to physics.” What they wanted to avoid was the “Fast & Furious” fantasy. “Lovable as those films are, you can’t drag an 8-ton safe between two cars and then turn a corner.”

And so began a yearlong construction of the movie’s 88 character vehicles. With duplicates, they made closer to 150, says Gibson.

The results are fabulous. They include the main villain’s ride, dubbed the Gigahorse, which is actually two 1959 Cadillac Coupe de Villes mounted on top of each other. “We built a chassis to suit, added two big-block V-8s connected to a planetary gear, special cooling, and a handmade gearbox. Something for the real motor freak,” says Gibson. Other rides

include a 1940s Dodge body married to the chassis of a monster truck—in one stunt it actually jumps over a moving big-rig tanker—and a hot rod covered in spikes. (That zany vehicle was surely influenced by a car seen in another early Aussie film, 1974’s “The Cars That Ate Paris.” Look up the YouTube trailer for a laugh.)

“Fury Road” is set in the near future, so why the reliance on old cars? Says Gibson: “If there’s going to be a war, you want real steel to protect you. And at the end of world, you can’t fix a computer. What would you salvage, a Corolla or a 1973 Falcon?”

Norris was in charge of all of the stunts that took place during 10 months of pre-production and shooting in the desert environs of the southern African country of Namibia and directed many of the action sequences as a unit director. “I was 21 during the filming of the ‘Road Warrior,’ and I turned 50 during ‘Fury Road,’” says Norris. “I doubled as Max during the crash of the Ford Falcon in the ‘Road Warrior,’ and here I was all those years later, sitting in essentially the same vehicle, and rolled it again.”

Filmmakers started with storyboards rather than a script. In this one, Max is given a ride in a ratted-out 1932 hot rod. It translated quite literally to the film, as seen below.



“I HOPE IT REINVIGORATES DOING STUNTS FOR REAL BECAUSE THE AUDIENCE CAN FEEL THAT. IT’S MORE EMOTIONAL.”



“Everything we did on ‘Road Warrior’ was real, as there was no other choice,” Norris says. “At the time we weren’t really sure what we were making. But then it came out and hit a nerve with fans of car and action films. Since then, it’s inspired a lot of other vehicle films.”

But the art of car stunts has waned as the reliance on computer graphics has grown. And that was a direction the filmmakers largely didn’t want to take. (There’s a monumental desert storm that is too huge to be anything but CGI.) Instead, Norris’ team relied on a camera crane mounted to a trick Toyota truck, often driving at 100 mph and swerving among the other vehicles as the crane did 360-degree turns. “We put the camera inches away from other cars in places you could never get it before.”

Some sequences involved more than 100 trucks, cars, and bikes converging in a mad armada. Norris refers to it as dance choreography with each vehicle moving to a different beat. “We drove every crazy vehicle that Colin Gibson designed,” he says. “Those are all real

people on real vehicles, and we pretty much crashed every single one of them.

“I hope it reinvigorates doing stunts for real because the audience can feel that. It’s more emotional. And our guys were in honest jeopardy: no crash helmets, no body protection, everyone was bare-chested.” Thankfully, there weren’t any major calamities despite all the vehicular mayhem.

Norris says many films will prepare months for a single crash. “We crashed two or three cars every single day; we’d crash something in the beginning of day, at lunchtime, and in the afternoon,” he says. “For a red-blooded stuntman, every day was pretty much Christmas.”

As for Gibson, when asked if the wholesale destruction of his concepts broke his heart, he’s firm. “Absolutely not,” he says. “You don’t make a Frankenstein and not expect that the villagers will attack you with pitchforks. The cars were built for the purpose of mayhem, and mayhem they got. In the story, the only vehicle that makes it back is the Gigahorse. The others meet a glorious, if pandemonious, death.” ■

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OUR FOUR SEASONS
FORD FIESTA ST TAKES ON ITS TOUGHEST
CHALLENGE YET: RALLY

By Christopher Nelson | Photography by Andrew Trahan



BE BLOODIED,
BRUISED,
AND BROKEN,
PLEASE



Rally

is vicious and violent, a nonstop gauntlet our 2014 Ford Fiesta ST couldn't possibly survive. So why bring it to the 100-Acre Wood Rally in Salem, Missouri? To watch it fail, finally, at something.

Ford's \$22,000 wunderkind quickly stole the spotlight from its big brother, the Focus ST, by being better at, well, everything. On road courses, we've passed cars with double the power that cost twice as much. At autocrosses, we've put it on three wheels carving between cones. On the street, we've shamed import tuners between stoplights. We even took it ice racing, smashed it into hard-packed snowbanks, and came out unscathed. This rally, though, will surely force the capable, versatile, durable Fiesta ST beyond its breaking point.

Pushing it there will be Andrew Comrie-Picard (ACP, as fans call him), 2014 Rally America two-wheel-drive champion and driver of the No. 20 Team O'Neil Ford Fiesta ST, and his navigator, Ole Holter, who will use our ST during the rally's reconnaissance. The "recce" occurs the day before a rally when teams drive the stages—segments of closed public roads—to get a feel for the course and conditions. Doing the recce in our car might seem idiotic, but ACP isn't concerned, noting that our Fiesta has the same architecture as his rally car. Sure, ACP, but basic engine and suspension geometry aside, your car is lifted and has a stronger suspension, a sequential gearbox, a rollcage, and rally-spec wheels and tires.

Before the recce, we talk to Holter over coffees. In rallying, the navigator is just as important as the driver. Holter, an electrical engineer from Southern California, follows detailed notes so he can alert ACP to what lies ahead during the rally. This is only Holter and ACP's ninth race together, but they've been friends for 12 years. We sit in the back seat of our Fiesta ST as ACP tops off the car with gas, and Holter walks our way with snacks and drinks. ACP starts to say something, but Holter cuts him off: "No, they didn't have Coke Zero, so I got you a Diet Coke instead." A lot of love, trust, and respect between these two.

The speed limit for the recce is thankfully 35 mph—any faster, and our Fiesta might shake itself apart. The snow-covered, dirt-and-gravel stages are unforgiving. Rocks pelt the car as we jerk around in the back seat like we're on a rickety wooden roller coaster. ACP opens the door, sticks his foot out of the moving car, and drags it along the ground, getting a feel for the road hidden



Driver Andrew Comrie-Picard and navigator Ole Holter wear helmets with integrated mics so they can hear one another over Team O'Neil's No. 20 Ford Fiesta ST rally car.

beneath the snow. Holter's voice is calm and melodic as he coolly rattles off directions until a loud, jarring "Caution!" disrupts the calmness. ACP brakes hard approaching an ice-covered hairpin and then slides through it sideways.

Stages come and go, and the Fiesta ST is taking abuse from deep potholes and sharp drops. We come upon a white Chevrolet Captiva stuck halfway up a steep, icy hill. ACP hammers up the incline and barely squeezes the ST between the Chevy and the shoulder but loses steam and gets stuck. Without hesitation, he spins the car around and, with



Seeing rally cars fly through the air is almost as awesome as driving our own car on Missouri's snow-covered back roads.



more weight over the front tires, backs up the hill. The recce ends, and our Fiesta ST is no worse for the wear.

The next morning we drive to the first stage, park, and hike through a forest of skinny ash trees. A creme-brulee-like layer of ice atop the snow breaks and pops underfoot. Nearby are a group of drunken Ukrainian dudes, a woman with her two bulldogs, Maggie and Jax, and a guy handing out moonshine-soaked cherries. We hear rapid-fire exhaust pops from a turbocharged rally car in the distance, its anti-lag keeping boost up. A Subaru WRX STI speeds down the tree-

lined road, flicks left then right, skates through a long, right sweeper, and disappears. A minute later, another does the same. Then an Evo, a Volvo, and a slew of other bruised and battered cars before the red-white-and-blue No. 20 Fiesta ST flies by.

"Watching the race is almost as fun as driving between stages," says a man short on teeth. We would've held to main roads en route to the next stage had the Fiesta ST not manhandled the recce. On a dirt road lightly peppered with snow, we take the 1.6-liter turbo-four to its 6,700-rpm redline between each quick, notchy shift.

LEÓN, MEXICO



The Wizard of World Rally

Volkswagen star Sébastien Ogier makes the case that loose, shifting surfaces produce the world's best drivers

THESE THREE POINTS ARE MINE. DON'T WORRY."

So said Sébastien Ogier to Volkswagen Motorsport boss Jost Capito before Rally Mexico's final stage March 8. Indeed, the driver who went quickest here would receive those bonus markers.

Ogier, two-time defending World Rally Championship titleholder, had already devoted three days and 20 stages to stomping his competitors, reminding us in the process why rallying speaks so forthrightly about driving skill. Even in an era when technology reigns supreme in many forms of motorsport, a rally driver's car control is what really matters.

Now, at 7,500 feet above sea level on El Brinco, the event's 21st and final stage, Ogier and navigator Julien Ingrassia have nothing to gain by pushing hard and everything to lose by running off the course. Yet they

don't hold back. Getting the most from their VW Polo R WRC, a tightly packaged all-wheel-drive instrument with a 318-hp, turbocharged, 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine, they roar over the nearly 7.8 miles some 5.6 seconds faster than anyone else at 6:50.5. Seeing this result post on television in the pits in León, the VW team erupts with joy.

Mexico is known among WRC events for long, fast stages on narrow roads, and the gravel is slippery. As compared to other series, rally drivers are handicapped by cars with relatively tall and narrow 215/60R-15 tires. Ogier was first on the course on Day 1, and his brilliance over the 27.4-mile El Chocolate stage, treacherous with fog and steep declines, produced a comfortable lead by noon. Meanwhile, the Estonian team of Ott Tänak and Raigo Molder tumbled

into a lake and barely escaped alive. After rescuers winched their Ford Fiesta from a depth of 16 feet, the mechanics found a fish in the cabin.

Circuit racing on pavement can lull you into semi-complacency. You become inured to the speed until a crash reveals the physical forces involved. But in rallying, as I discovered while standing up close on stages contested over mountainsides long ago denuded of holm oaks and mesquites, the cars rip and snort along. They're like fast feral hogs with all-wheel drive and a notion to fly. During the first midday break after El Chocolate, Ogier pops out of his Polo R, grinning, and expounds about the hazards that impart the sport's uniqueness. "We are special because we are racing in fantastic scenery," he says. "We are racing over the mountain on a normal road, and when people see

us coming—especially on gravel with the car completely sideways, with quite a lot of speed, doing crazy big jumps—the spectators respect that."

As well as anyone, Nicolas Mazet explains Ogier's magic as a driver. Mazet, a member of the VW's weather crew that reports course conditions, is from the same midsize Alpine town of Gap, France, where Ogier grew up. He speaks of his friend's indefatigability, his vision and intelligence, and his pursuit of wide and pure lines. "Maybe it comes from skiing," Mazet theorizes, referring to Ogier's first love. "And he brings the car back clean."

Before going to Mexico, I talked to 1985 Indy 500 winner Danny Sullivan. The American greatly admires VW's Capito—"one of the smartest guys in racing"—and rally drivers in general. "I'm not trying to take anything away from [Formula 1 champions Fernando] Alonso or [Sebastian] Vettel or any of the top IndyCar drivers or the NASCAR drivers," Sullivan said. "Rallying is a different discipline. But rally drivers are as good as anybody out there. With the loose surfaces moving underneath you all the time, you have to adapt."



At SayersBrook Bison Ranch, we hit one cattle grate hard enough to get all four tires off the ground.



onto one of the active stage roads—has delayed the rally, and organizers cancel the last few stages. It's a bummer, both for us and for ACP and Holter, who were working hard to make back time after breaking a tie rod. To cheer ourselves up, we all stop at SayersBrook Bison Ranch on the way out of town. Skip, its owner, lets rally teams conduct shakedown on his roads. ACP challenges us to keep up with his rally-spec Fiesta ST, giving us a better shot by fitting our car with 15-inch rally-spec wheels wrapped in skinny tires with fat sidewalls.

ACP's machine fires up and takes off, spitting gravel at us as it does. We dump the clutch, give chase, and remarkably close the gap. A rooster tail of snow and red dirt rains from the No. 20 ST as ACP tosses the car into a long turn, and we slide behind him, inches from his rear bumper. ACP goes flat out toward a cattle

grate, uses it as a ramp, and gets all four wheels in the air. We shouldn't, but the Fiesta ST's snapping point remains elusive. We hit the grate hard and fly for a second before slamming onto the snowy ground, all four tires scraping against the fender wells. We get out, expecting to see oil and antifreeze spitting every which way, but the only damage is a dislodged underbody spoiler.

An odd sense of disappointment sets in. We came here to see our Fiesta ST come up short for the first time. An economical hatch shouldn't be good at everything, but not even imitating rally drivers shattered it. We won't stop thrashing on the little street fighter during its final few months in our fleet, doing more track days, autocrosses, and anything else we dream up. But seeing how the Ford survived rally's cruel abuse, anything we do appears unlikely to break our tough Fiesta ST. ■

The steering is light and easy to flick, and the rear end rotates effortlessly and predictably. The road ahead is beautiful but grizzly, and we drive over a small rock that turns out to be the tip of a much larger rock, which lodges beneath the car. We shimmy the rock out before coming to a creek, 20 feet wide and 8 inches deep. A thick sheet of ice covers one half, and water runs over sharp boulders on the other. Turning around would be the smart thing to do, but we back up for a running start. The Fiesta falls into the creek with a thud. The left-front tire climbs onto the ice and spins as the right-front tire claws against pebbles on the creek bottom. The Fiesta ST climbs from the water. We holler and slap the dashboard.

Light snow begins to fall as we leave the day's final stage, turning into a white-out by the time we reach the hotel. The weather neuters the second day: Snow—as well as a postal worker who drove



Breaking away



THE
COMMON THRILLS OF
DRIVING AND CYCLING
MERGE ON A
MOUNTAIN TREK



By Jason H. Harper |
Photography by Brian Vance

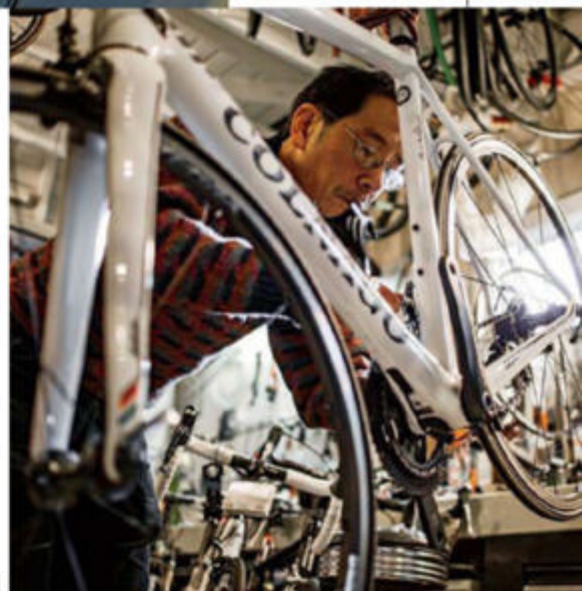


The author, left, astride the Ferrari bike, with pro Ferrari driver Jeff Westphal. The Ferrari bike arrives in pieces, below, and is put together by a professional at a local bike shop.



“I got the call to drive for Ferrari while I was riding my bike,” Jeff Westphal says, flashing a boyish grin. “Right here on this exact hill. Best ride of my life.” Then the Scuderia Corsa driver leans over his handlebars and flies down the hill, legs churning. He tucks into a long, curving switchback, swooshing over rough pavement and exiting inches away from an enormous redwood tree. I click into a bigger gear and follow, trying to mimic his smoothness, his gait, his speed. Ain’t gonna happen. I’ve got my work cut out for me.

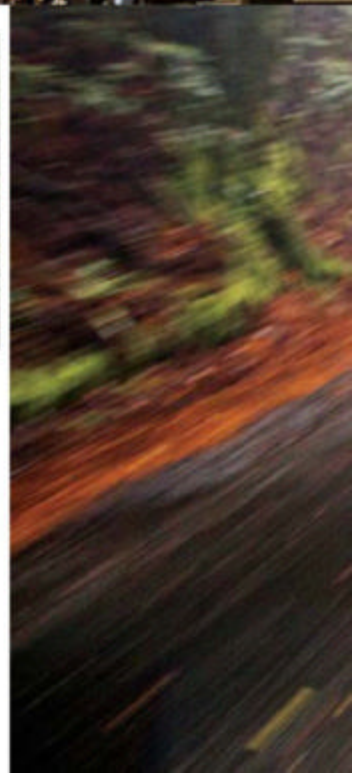
In fact, I’m going to get my butt kicked on both two wheels and four today. We’ve just parked our black Ferrari 458 Spider up the hill and swapped our driving shoes for Pearl Izumi cycling cleats. In front of us, there’s a 20-mile two-lane route warbling up the back side of Mount Tamalpais, a 2,500-foot-high peak outside of San Francisco. It’s an amazing road immortalized in about a billion car commercials. First we’ll ride it on our Colnago Ferrari-



IN CONVERSATIONS, ENZO FERRARI AND ERNESTO COLNAGO APPARENTLY AGREED THAT CARBON FIBER WAS THE FUTURE FOR BOTH THEIR COMPANIES.



Mount Tamalpais, a 2,500-foot-tall peak outside of San Francisco with varying microclimates, made for a great place to test both kinds of Ferraris. This carbon-fiber beauty, left, is also made near Maranello.



branded bicycles, and then in the Ferrari itself, gauging if a “superbike” can truly compare to a supercar. It will also give me a glimpse of how my handling skills and fitness level compare to the 28-year-old American racing for Ferrari’s factory team in the Tudor United SportsCar Championship.

Oftentimes it seems there is a war going on between drivers and bicyclists, but professional drivers such as Westphal have discovered the deep kinship between the two sports. Cycling keeps them fit and ready to race and also reinforces the fluid dynamics needed to negotiate the edge of speed and control. F1 drivers such as Mark Webber often scout out tracks by bike (I saw him do it before last year’s Le Mans), and Fernando Alonso wants to start his own cycling race team. Race-car drivers dig bicycles.

My own biking affair began three years ago when I bought a Cannondale Synapse and immediately fell in love with fast descents. But it was far trickier than expected. You may never forget how to ride a bike, but piloting a twitchy, carbon-fiber bullet down a spiraling spit of asphalt at 40 mph is something else entirely. It wasn’t until I drove a Jaguar



XKR-S on a rainy morning and rode my bike in the wet that afternoon that it clicked for me. Driving and riding demand the same set of skills. You have to look ahead, brake in a straight line, and always be conscious of moving your weight around. Suddenly, I was cycling like a vet. (Well, sort of. The spandex attire takes some getting used to. My advice: Avoid mirrors.)

I also began lusting after much more expensive bikes. The kind pros ride in Europe. Superbikes, the lightest, fastest bicycles out there. One manufacturer, Colnago, is based just a short drive from Ferrari in northern Italy and has been collaborating with Ferrari since the 1980s. In conversations, Enzo Ferrari and Ernesto Colnago apparently agreed that carbon fiber was the future for both their companies. One of Colnago’s latest

models, the VI-r, is made of the stuff and has a Ferrari insignia on the top stem. It was developed in a wind tunnel.

The VI-r bicycle has a carbon-fiber monocoque and a racing setup. It’s light (835 grams—less than 2 pounds). You can have it with regular mechanical shifters or an electronic shifting system. You can even get disc brakes. (All this sound familiar?) And it’s expensive. The frame alone starts at \$4,750. Add nice wheels and the best components, and you’re talking real money.

The 458 Spider we’ve driven here costs a bit more—about \$250,000. It has a 4.5-liter V-8 with 562 hp and 398 lb-ft of torque. I already know it’s fast, but I’m curious how fast it’ll be in Westphal’s hands. Who better to test both?

Westphal is the rare American racing for Ferrari, piloting a 458 for Scuderia Corsa in the GTD class of the Tudor series. The Bay Area native started driving karts at 18, but he went so fast so quickly that he soon moved up the ranks to Grand Am and the 24 Hours of Daytona. And he also likes cycling—a lot. All over these mountains. “Riding keeps me sharp,” he tells me as we begin our ascent of the mountain. I’m on the VI-r, and Westphal



is on another Colnago model, the C59.

The Ferrari bike is stiff as hell. As I'm hunched over the handlebars, the front of the bike feels solid and planted. The front of Westphal's C59, on the other hand, feels twitchy. Not that it's holding him back at all.

We've clicked into the lowest gears for our long ride uphill. The road is narrow, the tarmac crinkled like an unmade bed. Westphal tells me how our path will take us through several micro-climates. As the road writhes through the redwoods, our conversation becomes terser. I try to keep Westphal talking. "Tell



I'M NOTICING THAT HE ALSO DRIVES LIKE HE BIKES, YET AT MANY TIMES THE SPEED. HE PLACES THE WHEELS PERFECTLY AT THE EXTREME EDGES OF THE ROAD AND NEVER BRAKES TOO HARD, JUST ENOUGH TO KEEP THE NOSE DOWN. THE BALANCE AND RHYTHM ARE EERILY SIMILAR.



me more about the weather,” I say disingenuously. I’ll exploit any advantage I can get. Westphal, no fool, responds with a wan smile.

We finally level out under a canopy of dense forest—and into thick rain. “Weren’t we in sun 30 minutes ago?” I ask. Wet but unbowed, we burst out of the trees and onto a series of rolling hills blanketed in fog. There’s a tremendous vista over the mountains’ edge, surely, but it’s shrouded. My heart is yammering and my breath raspy. I’d love to take a break but instead pedal harder. I train on rolling hills, and it’s the only advantage I have. Power up in

The torturous climb is followed by spectacular views and then, above right, a dash along the same routes in the 458 Spider.



a big gear, and then coast down. I’ve got a good 25 pounds on Westphal, and I don’t need to pedal on the way down. Gravity does the job for me.

I out-bike Westphal on a few hills. Of course he’s soft pedaling and being a total gentleman. Part of the career of a pro driver these days is dealing with clients of lesser talent. I’m reminded of this when we switch bikes and turn around. He dives through curves and barely uses the brakes. There’s a deftness and a lightness of touch that can’t be taught. He rides the Colnago as it’s designed to be ridden.

When we arrive back to the car and stash the bikes nearby, I hand him the red Ferrari key. He puts the roof down, and then we fly. It was quiet biking the road. This is anything but, with the engine behind our heads keening. “You can just drive this car so fast. It’s so easy,”

Westphal says. I’m noticing that he also drives like he bikes, yet at many times the speed. He places the wheels perfectly at the extreme edges of the road and never brakes too hard, just enough to keep the nose down. The balance and rhythm are eerily similar.

The wind is also in our faces, and we blast up the long hill like a juggernaut and zip through the rain and into the fog, tasting all of the elements just like we did on the bikes. We switch seats again. The 458 is one of the best-dancing sports cars of all time. There’s a section near the top of Mount Tamalpais between the brow of two hills. Lots of challenging curves and off-camber corners work the Ferrari’s adaptive suspension. It’s the kind of road you want to run over and over again until you really know it. That’s exactly what I do, Westphal sitting relaxed beside me. Then I turn around for one last run. “You can get out if you want to,” I tell him. “I’m cool,” he replies. And then we hit it a final time, hard. Again, I try to replicate Westphal’s fluidity, his grace, his easy dialogue with the road. Not quite the same, but not bad.

We top the brow of the hill and I coast, heading up to a parking area at the road’s end. There’s one very steep section just before the parking lot where my lungs had nearly exploded on the bike. The Ferrari’s naturally aspirated V-8 breathes easily and propels us to the summit effortlessly. “Well, there are some advantages to the car, right?” quips Westphal.

I park at the edge of a cliff and turn off the car. The sea of clouds has since parted, revealing the city below. It’s spectacular. “Every time I get all the way up here,” Westphal says, “it’s worth it.” I couldn’t agree more, whether it be on a superbike or in a supercar. ■

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Offer Valid 3-1-15 to 6-30-15

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MORE DRIVEN

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Offer Valid 5/1/15 to 6/30/15

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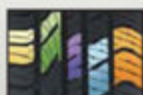


Ultra High Performance All-Season 53 sizes in 15" to 20"

Developed for enthusiast drivers that want to be able to forget the forecast, Ecsta 4X II tires improve treadwear along with all-season traction in wet and wintry conditions, even in light snow.



Asymmetric Tread Design blends dry road steering response and handling with all-season traction in wet conditions.



Variable Sized Tread Blocks lower road harmonics for a quieter, more comfortable ride, especially at highway speeds.



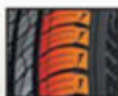
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Premium KL33

\$120
REBATE

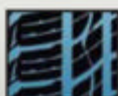


Crossover/SUV Touring All-Season 16 sizes in 17" to 20"

Available in sophisticated low-profile, large rim diameter sizes, Crugen (Cruising Generation) Premium's advanced tread compound enhances traction, tire life and all-season versatility, including traction in light snow.



Wide, Rounded Shoulders create a soft contact edge with the road to enhance steering response and highway feel.



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Available in 52 sizes from 16" to 20" and 22"

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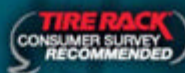
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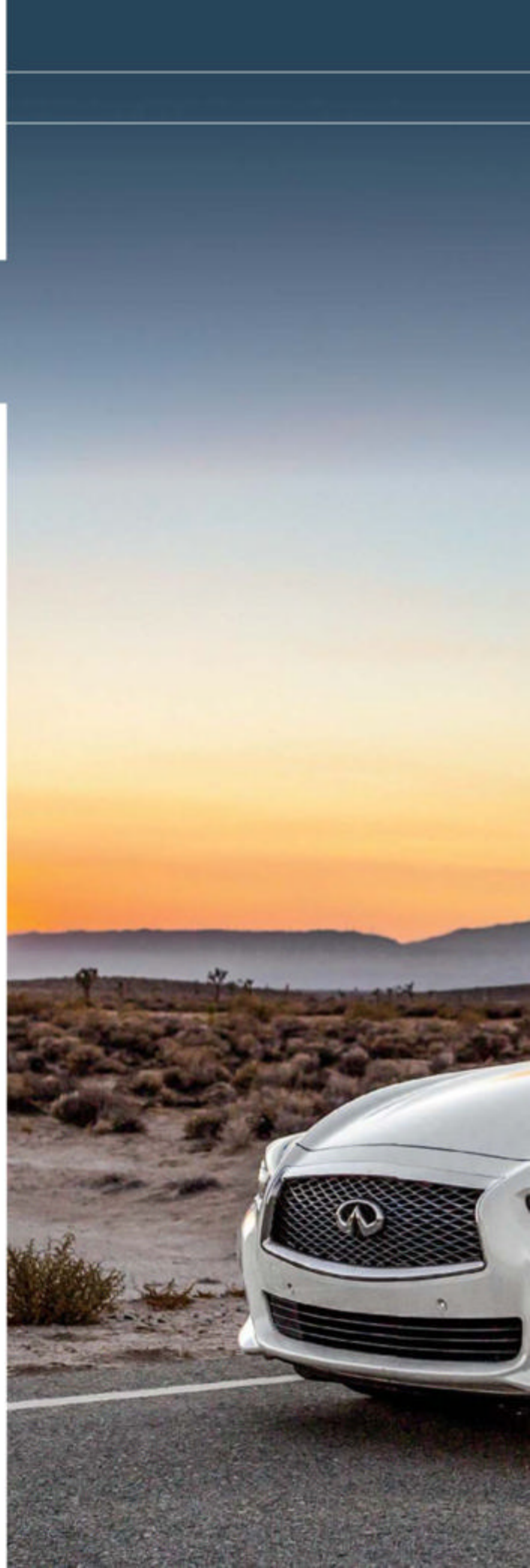
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his Infiniti Q50 is a completely modern sedan. It's a car that can go anywhere, do anything, and show you a pretty fine time to boot. And yet for all the style, safety, and speed shown by our 2014 Infiniti Q50 AWD Premium in every season of the past year, you'd think it would get a little more respect from us.

As we page through the logbook of this all-wheel-drive version of the Q50, we find records of gas stops from one end of the country to the other. In the 19,993 miles we spent with it, this car went from Ann Arbor to Los Angeles, not to mention visits to out-of-the-way places such as Blackwells Corner, California, and Moab, Utah. It saw a record season of snowfall in Detroit, the bright neon lights of Las Vegas, and a rosy-fingered dawn on California Highway 1. Tasked with a wide range of demands that included daily transportation, weekend sport, vacation adventures, and cross-country touring, the Infiniti never once let us down or failed to get us to our destination.

From the beginning, we envisioned a year of wide-ranging drives with the Infiniti Q50, so we tried hard to choose an appropriate mix of features from the car's extensive list of options. We declined the ride harshness of the sporting S model, selected the all-weather mobility of all-wheel drive, chose a sophisticated array of electronic connectivity features, and embraced a comprehensive package of active safety features, including Infiniti's new all-electronic steering technology. And as the road unraveled before us, every aspect of this car's equipment list came into play.

When snowflakes are falling outside your office window and the news is telling you that more snow has fallen this season than at any time in the past 100 years, there is nothing like looking out into the parking lot and knowing that your Infiniti Q50 has all-wheel drive. Sure, we'll admit that the combination of winter tires and modern traction/stability control systems deliver a certain basic standard of all-weather mobility even in a rear-wheel-drive car. But as



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK M. HOEY

2014 INFINITI Q50 AWD PREMIUM

Electronic sophistication, all-around capability don't equal much fun





RUNNING COSTS

MILEAGE:

19,993

WARRANTY:

4-yr/60,000-mi bumper-to-bumper
6-yr/70,000-mi powertrain
4-yr/60,000-mi roadside assistance

SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE:

5,802 mi: \$79.05

16,180 mi: \$331.21

OUT-OF-POCKET:

1,281 mi: Purchase, mount, and balance Bridgestone Blizzak LM-32 winter tires, \$778.88

2,850 mi: WeatherTech FloorLiner mats, front and rear, \$203.85

3,618 mi: Reinstall Bridgestone Potenza RE97 all-season tires, \$64.00

16,180 mi: Repair door ding and spoiler damage, \$1,301.90

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

EPA city/highway/combined:
19/27/22 mpg

Observed: **24.6 mpg**

COST PER MILE:

(Fuel, service, winter tires) **\$0.30**
(\$1.20 including depreciation)

TRADE-IN VALUE:

\$35,500

*Estimate based on information from Intellichoice.com

any American who lives in the snowbelt will tell you, all-wheel drive makes winter less intimidating simply because you feel ready for whatever happens.

We were fascinated by the Q50's combination of electronically activated steering and a high-tech, camera-based system for lane-keeping assistance, but we have to admit it weirded us out at first. The drive-by-wire steering itself drew complaints for its unpredictable responses and lack of feedback. And to test the system, we tried hands-off driving, which is a silly stunt definitely not recommended by Infiniti. The Q50 would do it, but the car kind of ping-ponged from one side of the freeway lane to the other, as brakes pulled back the car from the side of the road. Finally we began to understand that these features were meant to supplement the driver's input, not replace them.

On the plus side, this system does improve long-distance travel because you can relax your hands on the wheel for a bit and be assured that the car won't wander, which lets you reboot your mental concentration. Or, as executive editor Todd Lassa reminds us, it also lets you fiddle with the comprehensive yet infernally complex sub-menus in the Q50's touchscreen interface (buttons to change radio stations, please!) without worrying about blundering into another lane. Sure, this technology seems superfluous

when the sun is out, the birds are singing, and you can see perfectly. But when the night is dark, the weather is bad, and lane markings are hard to see, lane-keeping assistance is a fine thing to have.

Lane-keeping assistance wasn't something associate Web editor Eric Weiner enjoyed during his drive on the interstate between Ann Arbor and Las Vegas, and the electric steering's lack of on-center feel proved distracting. The Q50's drive-by-wire steering promises to adapt to the different priorities of comfort, speed, and safety with one electronic package, but so far it's not ready for prime time.

The Q50's fast-acting AWD system defaults to 100 percent

The Q50's electronic interface with app-style submenus is among the best, yet we still long for buttons. Good visibility enhances a fine touring ride.





PROS & CONS



- Lively V-6 engine
- Entirely trouble-free
- All-wheel drive



- All-electric steering
- Stiffer ride than most
- Sluggish shifting

PRICES & EQUIPMENT

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

All-wheel drive; 17-inch wheels with run-flat tires; electric steering; drive mode control; automatic LED headlights; LED foglights and taillights; power sunroof; cruise control; tilt-and-telescopic steering column; keyless entry and ignition; eight-way power front seats; heated front seats; automatic dual-zone climate control; rearview camera; InTouch electronic dual display w/controller and voice recognition; Bluetooth; 14-speaker Bose audio system; two USB ports; auxiliary audio jack; auxiliary video jack; SiriusXM satellite radio with 1-year subscription.

OUR OPTIONS

Technology package (\$3,200), including: adaptive front lighting system; automatic high beams; distance control assist; blind-spot monitoring and intervention system; backup collision intervention; adaptive cruise control; forward collision warning; forward emergency braking; lane-departure warning and intervention; active lane-keeping assist; advanced climate control. Deluxe Touring package (\$3,100), including direct adaptive steering; power tilt-and-telescopic steering column; auto-dimming exterior mirrors; front seat memory; 60/40-split folding rear seats; around-view camera; front and rear parking assist; rain-sensing windshield wipers; maple wood trim. All-weather package (\$230), including floor mats. Navigation package (\$1,400), including SiriusXM traffic, Infiniti Connection. Accessory Wheel package (\$1,800), including bright-finish 17-inch aluminum wheels. Leather Seating package (\$1,000).

rear-wheel drive when the road is dry, but it will send as much as 50 percent of available power to the front wheels when its sensor array detects any loss of traction at the rear. Photographer Martyn Goddard tested all this while driving the Q50 on dirt roads in Moab, Utah, where all-wheel drive usually is only a Jeep thing.

Once the Infiniti finally made its way to L.A., we generally drove the Q50 in Sport mode with the steering calibrated for heavy effort and minimal lane-keeping assistance, so we really didn't take advantage of the steering technology and active-safety electronics very much. But the Q50's blind-spot warning lamps in the A-pillars and the active brake assist proved crucial in a city where no one checks mirrors before switching lanes and the traffic in front of you stacks up to a halt without warning. The forward-collision warning and braking features saved editor-in-chief Mike Floyd's bacon once on SoCal's infamous I-405 freeway. Active safety technology might seem like something you can do without when buying a car, but when you balance the price of purchase against the cost of body repair from a typical fender bender,



the arithmetic makes sense. In the end, we think all these active safety features have their place.

As we started our year with the 2014 Q50, the one thing we didn't fret about was the car's sporting personality. After all, this car is the offspring of the 2003 Infiniti G35, the sedan that reinvented Nissan's overall performance identity with its rear-wheel-drive FM ("front midship") chassis and VQ V-6 engine, both of which also found their way to the Nissan 350Z. And as we consumed the breakfast of champions in the parking lot of a cheap motel in Monterey,

California, about an hour before dawn, we looked forward to a great day of driving the Q50 on California Highway 1.

As you'd expect, we had a fine time driving along the water, especially over the 65 miles of tight, deeply cambered corners between Big Sur and Ragged Point. Yet the Q50's quick steering response (2.0 turns lock to lock), abrupt throttle response in Sport mode, and somewhat touchy brakes took some of the fun out of the drive. The sluggish transmission also resisted our efforts to wring out the

eager-to-rev V-6. When it comes to fast driving, the Infiniti Q50 is the kind of car that likes flat corners, the sort of thing you'd find on a track, not on Highway 1.

After all that driving, we found plenty to like about the Q50. The driving position is great, notable for the expansive field of view afforded by the low cowl. The back seat is big enough for taking friends to dinner, and the trunk is big enough for a week on vacation. Nothing went wrong with the car (other than the hellacious door ding it picked up while parked near the beach in Venice). The Infiniti dealers treated us well during its regular service intervals, and the sophistication of the car's active-safety features is genuinely impressive. There's so much comfort, entertainment, and safety technology in the Infiniti Q50 that it seems pointless to consider a larger, more expensive sedan.

And yet we have a hard time recommending this car. It never made us feel as if we were in command. It is comfortable, but it feels slack rather than supple. It is fast, but it makes its moves abruptly, not athletically. Just like our experience with the current BMW



3 Series, this Q50 has taught us that we prefer a car where the driver plays a dominant role. And when we try to be too smart with our pick of options, it's easy to create a car that's far more adult than we are. We always felt a little disappointed with this car, and our logbook over the year records its share of unfair snarkiness as a result.

In the end, the Infiniti Q50 AWD Premium is the kind of sedan in which we'd like to see every American. It would impress them with its ability to go anywhere and do anything, and its active safety features would make them far better neighbors on the turnpike

during the drive to work. But as for us, we finally admit that we like our cars amped up, as if we were surly teenagers. We might complain about road noise, ride harshness, and poor fuel economy, but sports sedans are where it's at for us. We can appreciate the safety net of electronics designed to keep bad things from happening to us, yet this is an abstract sort of thing. It's the engine and chassis we notice most in the cars we care about, and this luxuriously appointed Infiniti Q50 turned out to be more safe and sane than we are. ■

2014 INFINITI Q50 AWD PREMIUM

STAR RATING:



BASE PRICE:

\$42,605

AS-TESTED PRICE:

\$53,135

ENGINE:

3.7L DOHC 24-valve V-6/
328 hp @ 7,000 rpm,
269 lb-ft @ 5,200 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

7-speed automatic

LAYOUT:

4-door, 5-passenger,
front-engine, AWD sedan

EPA MILEAGE:

19/27/22 (city/hwy/
combined)

SUSPENSION F/R:

Control arms, coil springs/
multilink, coil springs

BRAKES F/R:

Vented discs/vented discs

TIRES:

P225/55R-17 Bridgestone
Potenza RE97 AS

L x W x H:

188.3 x 71.8 x 57.2 in

WHEELBASE:

112.2 in

HEADROOM F/R:

39.5/36.8 in

LEGROOM F/R:

44.5/35.1 in

SHOULDER ROOM F/R:

56.7/56.1 in

CARGO CAPACITY:

13.5 cu ft

WEIGHT:

3,870 lb

WEIGHT DIST. F/R:

57/43%

0-60 MPH:

5.3 sec

60-0 MPH:

124 ft

1/4-MILE:

13.8 sec @ 100.5 mph

SKIDPAD:

0.85 g



The Q50 goes anywhere, does everything, from Monument Valley to the concrete canyons of L.A.

MONUMENT VALLEY: MARTYN GODDARD, LOS ANGELES: MICHAEL SHAFFER



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CADDY**
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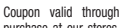
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1967-'68 MERCURY COUGAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM WALKER

Everything you always wanted in
a Mustang, only better

Coming home to the 1960s with lots of style: whitewall tires, bucket seats, and wood trim for the steering wheel and dash.

It was no secret that the Mercury Cougar had been based on the wildly successful 1965 Ford Mustang, but it was much more than a badge-engineered version of the original ponycar. It was sporty, yet it was also luxurious. It had not only style but also grace. In short, the Cougar

was the very definition of what Mercury promoted as “America’s most complete luxury sports car.” Then again, the 1967-’68 Cougar was arguably America’s only small luxury sports car of the era.

The first-generation Cougar has a look all its own, which is highlighted by a grille that has much in common designwise with the business end of an electric shaver. Complete with vacuum-operated hideaway headlights, this expansive, bipartite nose clip is the car’s signature styling element. At the tail end of this cool kitty are taillights with three sequentially operated elements secreted behind vertical chrome strips. From nose to tail, the car is 6.7 inches longer than a 1967-’68 Mustang.

Conceptually, the Mercury Cougar lies between a sporty car

like the Ford Mustang and a personal luxury car like the era’s Ford Thunderbird. The Cougar rides better than the former thanks to a wheelbase that’s 3.2 inches longer, along with longer rear leaf springs. And the Cougar is a bit less opulent than the latter, which had evolved into a large, luxurious coupe during the 1960s. The Cougar was offered only as a two-door pillarless hardtop in either base or upscale XR-7 trim. The XR-7 includes a wood-grain dash, toggle switches, and an overhead binnacle of warning lights, all meant to present what the marketing guys called “the look of hand-tooled elegance.” The Cougar XR-7 was meant to conjure up the image of a European-style grand touring car.

It’s been suggested that “XR-7”



is a cipher for “experimental racing,” and there was, in fact, a team of Cougars prepared by NASCAR specialist Bud Moore for drivers Dan Gurney and Parnelli Jones to compete in the 1967 Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) Trans-Am road-racing championship. Yet despite the



ponycar persona, the Cougar was essentially a boulevardier, serenely quiet compared to a Mustang thanks in part to 123 pounds of additional acoustic insulation.

When the Mercury Cougar debuted at the end of 1966, it really caught the collective imagination of the car-buying public. It was the centerpiece of another marketing effort by Mercury to establish an identity as an upscale, GM-style brand, something the division had done at least once each decade since it was established in 1938 and would continue to attempt until it finally gave up and disappeared at the end of 2011.

Ron Duby, the owner of this nearly perfect 1968 Mercury Cougar XR-7, was predisposed from birth to be attracted to the

new, hot Mercury. The first new car owned by his parents had been a 1950 Mercury Club Coupe, known as the choice of hot-rod customizers, especially after the James Dean film “Rebel Without a Cause” (1955). His parents brought Duby home from the hospital in the big Merc’s successor, the 1953 Monterey.

In October 1968, young Ron picked out a leftover ’68 Cougar in Nordic Blue for his mom and dad from the inventory at McCormack Motors in Mount Kisco, New York. Before his 17th birthday, Duby’s parents gave the car to him, but its tenure was short-lived. It was soon stolen, stripped, and finally dumped, minus even its wheels. In 1975 Duby bought a 5-year-old Cougar XR-7, but it too was stolen.



WHY BUY?

More than you could ever want in a Ford Mustang, for less. Though the first-generation Mustang is more highly valued as a collectible, the Mercury Cougar is less often seen on the street and in collectible car shows, and it drives like a far more refined car. Even better, the Cougar costs significantly less than a Mustang. The Cougar is a qualitatively more distinctive collectible than the Mustang, and it can even serve as an everyday driver thanks to an abundance of available drivetrain parts. Here is sport and luxury in one unique, sophisticated, and reasonably priced package. Plus hideaway headlights and sequential taillights—so snazzy, so ’60s!



THE SPECS

ENGINES

4.7L OHV V-8/200-225 hp

@ 4,400-4,800 rpm,
282-305 lb-ft @
2,400-3,200 rpm;

4.9L OHV V-8/210-230 hp

@ 4,600-4,800 rpm,
295-310 lb-ft @
2,600-2,800 rpm;

6.4L OHV V-8/280-325 hp

@ 4,400-4,800 rpm,
403-427 lb-ft @
2,600-3,200 rpm;

7.0L OHV V-8, 390 hp

@ 5,600 rpm,
460 lb-ft @ 3,200 rpm

TRANSMISSIONS

3-speed manual, 4-speed manual, 3-speed automatic

DRIVE

Rear-wheel

FRONT SUSPENSION

Coil springs

REAR SUSPENSION

Semi-elliptical leaf springs

BRAKES F/R

Drums, drums/
discs, drums

WEIGHT

3,119-3,591 lb



Ron Duby never got over his Cougar obsession, and after a six-year search he came to own the beautiful 1968 Cougar XR-7 seen here. It’s a California car (note the black plate) finished in Black Cherry with an “Oxford roof” (Mercury-speak for a vinyl-covered top), and it has leather upholstery and air-conditioning. The odometer shows a few more than 110,000 miles, but only 700 of those have been added since Duby acquired the car in 2011.

He bought it just three months after the family of its original owner parted with it, when he saw it parked beside the road with a “For Sale” sign. It had been re-sprayed about 15 years earlier, and though the paint was still lustrous, the original pinstripes had been lost in the process. Ron found an artisan who replicated the original double-stripe pattern freehand, restoring the factory-fresh look. After acquiring a correct set of 1968 XR-7 wheel covers, a mix of meticulous cleaning and maintenance accomplished the rest.

This 1968 Mercury Cougar XR-7 is powered by a 4.9-liter J-code V-8 with a four-barrel carburetor. After driving this car, we can tell you that the total effect is one of powerful assurance coupled with an exceptionally smooth ride, nothing like the crass Ford Mustang of the same era. The Select-Shift Merc-O-Matic changes gears unobtrusively yet can be operated manually if you are so inclined. The Cougar corners fairly well, and there’s not a whole lot of body roll. But driving this car hard is not the point; the Cougar is a car to savor both outside and in. There’s a sense of serenity in the cabin and, yes, “hand-tooled luxury.” ■



**1981
AMC Concord**

SOLD AT \$4,950



S/N 1AMCA0652BK194125

BEIGE OVER TAN CLOTH

interior. 100-hp, 4.2-liter inline-six; three-speed automatic transmission. Air-conditioning, power steering, power brakes, bucket seats, and a vinyl roof. Fewer than 50,000 actual miles. No visible rust; very good (possibly original) paint; good chrome. No issues present with the vinyl roof. The clean cloth interior still looks good.

A very nice driver to a car show, where you will win the Concord class because you will be the only person with a Concord. Wisconsin-based American Motors Corporation built modest, affordable cars that had some impact on the market. The 1978-1983 Concord, however, is not at the top of that list. Even so, what better way to relive the '80s than a beige but forgettable two-door Concord loaded with era-correct styling cues? Great fun for the money now that offbeat cars of the 1970s and 1980s are cool.

**1957 Studebaker
Commander Provincial**

SOLD AT \$26,400



S/N 8469918

**BLACK AND ROSE GOLD OVER
black and gold vinyl and cloth.**

185-hp, 4.2-liter V-8; three-speed manual transmission. One of 3,395 built in 1957. Good but not great paint. Some chrome is good; some needs attention. Delaminating glass in the windshield; weak rubber trim. Rare Studebaker wire-style wheel covers. Redone interior in generic vinyl and cloth. Looks like someone could not find the "Provincial" trim for the right-hand side, so a "Studebaker" nameplate was installed instead.

Despite the seller's claims about a show-quality restoration, this Studebaker wagon has lots of needs. Said to be an original California car with black license plates, it does have some rare luxury options. Plenty to like, but some things disappoint. And although the Raymond Loewy-designed Studebakers of the early 1950s look European, this later model year looks like a Chevy. Fully priced for its condition.

**1974
Volkswagen Thing**

SOLD AT \$18,700



S/N 1832943403

DOVE BLUE OVER BLACK

vinyl. 46-hp, 1.6-liter flat-four; four-speed manual transmission. Much nicer than the day it left the factory. Excellent paint, chrome, trim, and glass. The vinyl top fits nicely. Black trim on the wheels appears powder-coated. Lower ride height than factory spec. The clean, original-style interior includes wooden floorboards and a new dash and steering wheel. Ready to show.

The VW Type 181 Thing was produced from 1968 to 1980, and some 140,763 examples of this World War II-style command car were built. Made street-legal for the United States in 1972, the Thing was available here for a short few years before being dropped from the Volkswagen lineup when safety standards became stricter. It was so simple in concept and operation that it made the comparable Beetle seem luxurious and complicated. Now widely accepted in the collector car market.

**1976
Jensen GT**

SOLD AT \$10,450



S/N 30224

WHITE OVER BLACK AND

blue vinyl. 140-hp, DOHC 2.0-liter inline-four; five-speed manual transmission. The original paint shows some dullness; good glass but poor rubber strips. Fewer than 8,000 miles since new. Good chrome and trim; new tires on original wheels. The original tapestry-style interior upholstery still shows well with protective plastic on the door panels.

The Jensen GT was the sport wagon version (one of 509 built) of the Jensen-Healey roadster, a car bankrolled by Kjell Qvale, a highly successful San Francisco importer of British cars, notably Austin-Healey, and a founder of the Pebble Beach concours. The Jensen GT is powered by the famous Lotus 907 Twin Cam, an engine informally known as the "Torqueless Wonder." This car will need quite a bit of fix-up, but the result will be a fine British sports car in the spirit of the 1950s, only with the speed and refinement of the 1970s.

Barrett-Jackson Auctions

1973 JAGUAR XK-E 2+2 | SOLD AT \$135,300

FEATURE CAR

S/N UD1S74974

SILVER GRAY OVER BISCUIT BROWN

leather. 314-hp, SOHC 5.3-liter V-12; four-speed manual transmission. Recently and very nicely restored. Excellent throughout: The paint is top-quality; all exterior trim is bright and sharp; all brightwork is highly polished. This original California delivery car is equipped with traditional wire wheels and all-important air-conditioning. This is one of 7,297 Series 3 2+2 Coupes produced between 1971 and 1975.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF BARRETT-JACKSON

**1980
Toyota Land Cruiser BJ42****SOLD AT \$39,600**

S/N BJ40041749

WHITE OVER GRAY VINYL.

98-hp, 3.4-liter inline-four diesel; four-speed manual transmission. Right-hand-drive model imported from South America. OEM wheels and exhaust snorkel. Excellent paint and new glass. Equipped with power steering and air-conditioning. Very nice interior with OEM gauges and factory carpet kit. 57,465 original miles.

The BJ42 model was never sold to the general public in the U.S. Like the similar, better-known FJ40, this diesel-powered utility has plenty of cross-generational appeal. So why are prices dropping in the collectible market? Supply and demand. A few years ago, some well-restored FJ40s appeared at collector auctions, and some brought close to \$100,000. So plenty of people then bought old FJ40s for \$20,000 and put a year of restoration into them. Too many came to market at the same time, so values dropped. A great buy for the long term, not so much for a buy-'n'-flip.

**1969 Plymouth
Barracuda "Mod Top"****SOLD AT \$33,000**

S/N BH23F9B140342

SUNFIRE YELLOW OVER

yellow vinyl with floral inserts. 230-hp, 5.2-liter V-8; four-speed automatic transmission. Great paint and brightwork; the vinyl top appears excellent. You could get just the Mod Top (also an option on the Plymouth Satellite), or the truly hip could get the same Flower Power look for the interior upholstery as in this car.

This Barracuda is one of 937 Mod Tops built in 1969 (it's No. 90 of 118 in the Mod Top Registry). If your goal is to look like you just drove off the set of "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In" (ask your parents about the 1960s TV show that inspired "Monty Python's Flying Circus"), there is no better ride in the world. Best automotive trivia ever? Stauffer Plastics, a supplier of tablecloths and shower curtains, made the floral fabric. Is this car worth the money? You bet your sweet bippy. (Parents, again.)

**1956
Volkswagen Beetle****SOLD AT \$11,550**

S/N 1261092

DIAMOND GREEN OVER

green vinyl. 36-hp, 1.2-liter flat-four; four-speed manual transmission. Good paint. Some of the chrome is of poor quality and shows rust bubbles, but most of it is good. Clean interior with vinyl seats; aftermarket luggage rack. Diamond Green is said to be a one-year-only color.

The car card reads "recent restoration," and there is no doubt that is true. You could smell the fresh paint on this car from 10 feet away. It's the little things that keep a car from selling for top dollar sometimes, and those rusty vent windows really hurt. The lesson here: Spend \$2,000 on repairs, make an additional \$7,000. You can play the auction game, but you have to be smart even when the transaction price is low. Expect more old Beetles, as the charm is high and so is the number still on the road.

**1991
GMC Syclone Pickup****SOLD AT \$17,050**

S/N 1GDCT14Z2M8802734

BLACK OVER BLACK CLOTH.

280-hp, turbocharged, 4.3-liter V-6; four-speed automatic transmission. All-wheel drive. Good paint has a few faint scratches; very good chrome and exterior trim. Seats with red piping and clean cloth. Contemporary reports said the Syclone's 0-60 mph sprint of 4.3 seconds was faster than any Corvette or Ferrari. Included in the sale are the original window sticker, a GMC certificate of origin, product brochure, and service records.

One of a reported 2,995 Syclone trucks built. This pickup is said to be one of 31 returned unsold from Saudi Arabia. The seller states 30 were later sold in a lottery to GM employees, and one was broken up for parts. The Syclone was joined by the 1992-1993 GMC Typhoon sport-utility, and both are collectible today, good ideas that came before their time. The Syclone is a very good buy for a usable pickup that can really haul.

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA | JANUARY 10-18, 2015**THE STORY BEHIND THE SALE:**

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE the impact that the Jaguar E-type (properly referred to as "XK-E" in the U.S.) had in the marketplace when it was introduced in 1961. Fast, sexy, and exotic enough to turn heads from Monte Carlo to Modesto, it had Jaguar's well-known inline six-cylinder engine and room for a friend. As the original Series 1 car morphed into the Series 2 in 1968, many practical changes were made, but the car kept its overall shape and dimensions. With the

introduction of the Series 3 in 1971, however, things changed.

The Series 3 featured Jaguar's newly developed 5.3-liter V-12, yet this car has not been considered as collectible as the Series 1 or 2. Notorious for quality problems, it was named by *Time* as one of the "50 Worst Cars of All Time." The magazine further said of the modified shape, "Imagine taking one of the world's most beautiful cars and sticking it in a taffy puller."

In the 40 years since the last E-type came down the assembly line, most of the best examples have already been tucked away in collectors' garages. So now the Series 3 is having its day in the sun. All the V-12 gremlins of 1975 are an easy fix, and drivers of the big and tall persuasion can actually fit behind the wheel of a Series 3. This price would be big money for an E-type roadster; it is enormous for a coupe. Expect to see more Jaguar XK-E Series 3 cars cross the \$100,000 barrier.

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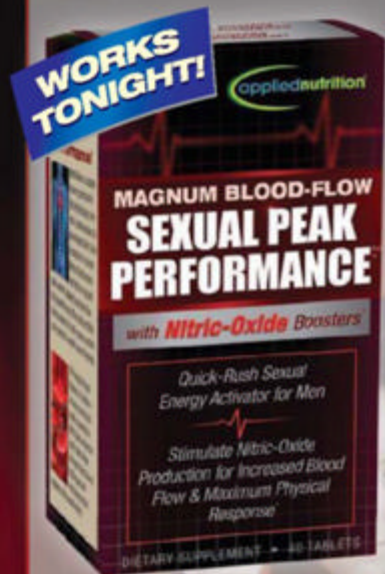
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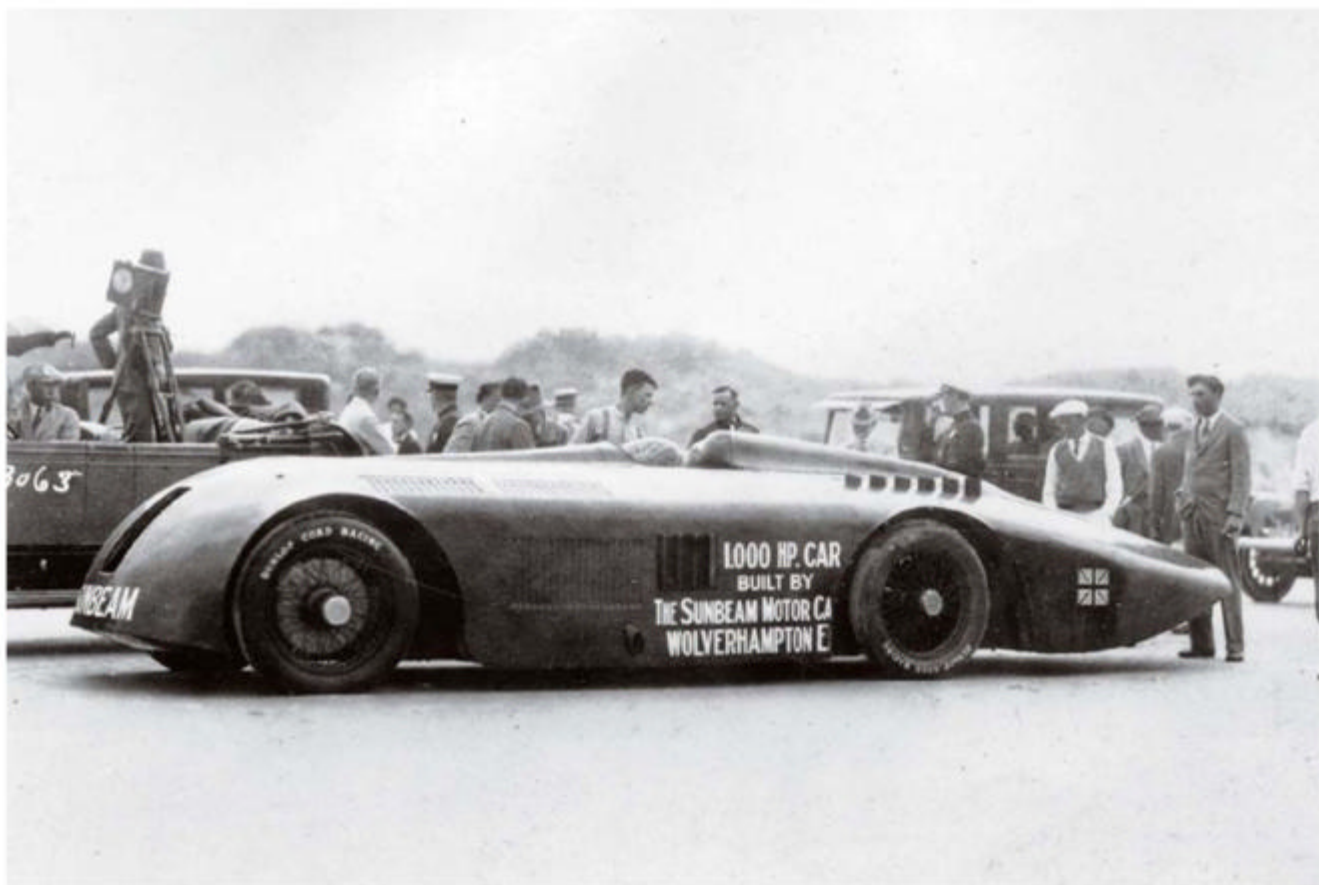
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Non Sequitur

BARRIER BREAKER

Bill France Sr. would not establish NASCAR for another 21 years, but perceptions regarding automotive speed vaulted to a new plane on March 29, 1927, on Florida's famous Daytona Beach. The Sunbeam 1000 HP Mystery, powered by two Sunbeam Matabele 22.4-liter V-12 aircraft engines actually yielding closer to 900 hp, became the first automobile to exceed 200 mph. Thirty-year-old Henry Segrave drove it to a top-end of 207 mph and a new land speed record average of 203.79 mph. The car, nicknamed "The Slug," is on display in England's Beaulieu National Motor Museum.



THE SLUG: RICHARD H. LESESNE VIA MOTORING PICTURE LIBRARY

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